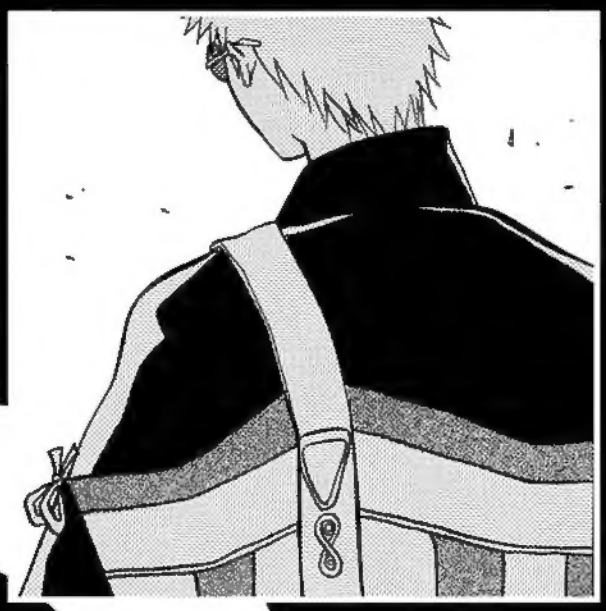
# CORPSE PRINCESS

YOSHIICHI AKAHITO

2

# CORPSE PRINCESS



## CONTRACTING MONK (NOUN)

REFERS TO MONKS WHO FORM CONTRACTS WITH CORPSE PRINCESSES AND FIGHT TO DESTROY SHIKABANE. THE POSITION IS ONLY OPEN TO MONKS AT THE DAI-SOUZU RANK OR HIGHER.

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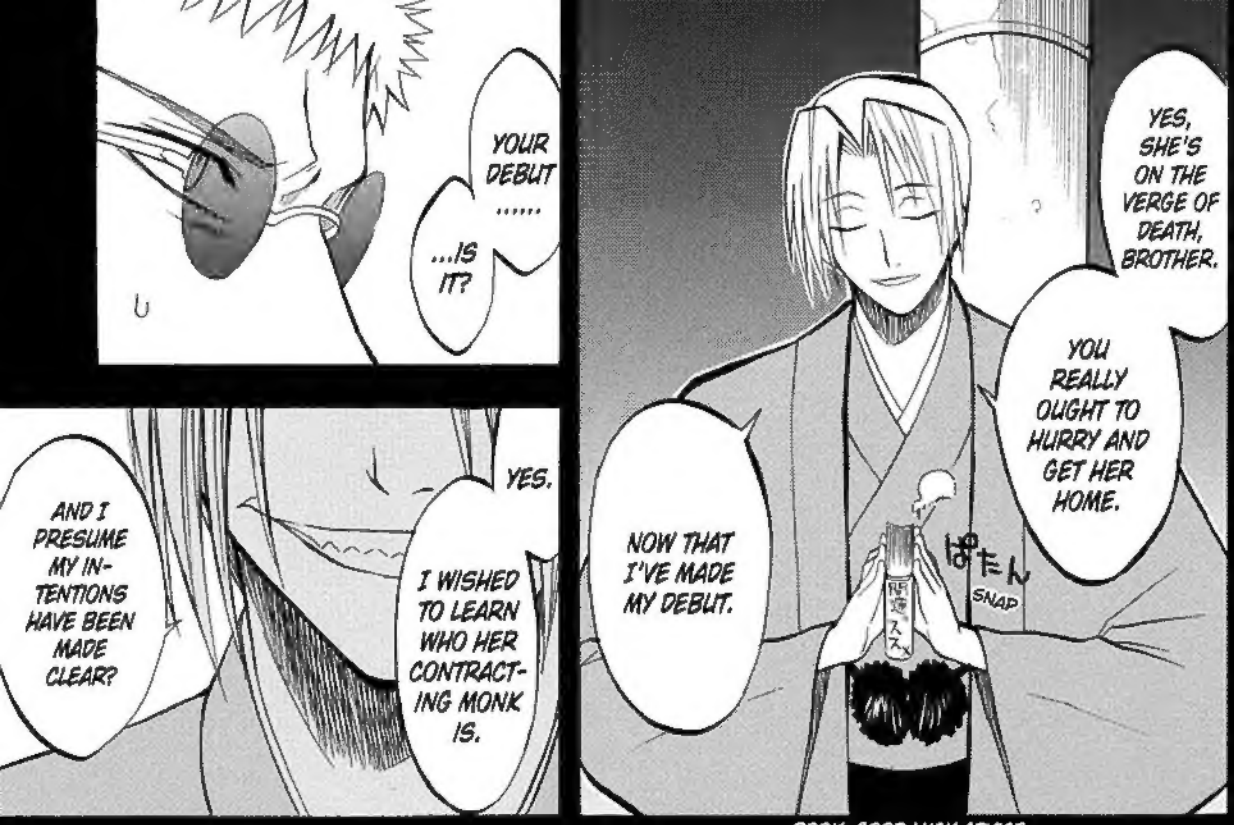
# DEATH 5:
# NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

BEARD KEISEI (GROWN FREELY) ILLUSTRATION

I KEEP IT CUT DURING WORK AND FORMAL RITUALS, BUT OTHERWISE I HAVE NO PROBLEM LEAVING IT BE.

AKASHA SHISHI-DOU?
I'VE NOT HEARD THAT NAME FOR SOME TIME.
...AND IT IS A NAME I HAD HOPED NOT TO HEAR FOR MUCH, MUCH LONGER.
Was it truly him?
YEAH... SOME-HOW.
I WAS THERE TO VERIFY IT MYSELF.
PRESS
...
-KINA
HEY !!
MAKINA!! STAY WITH ME!!

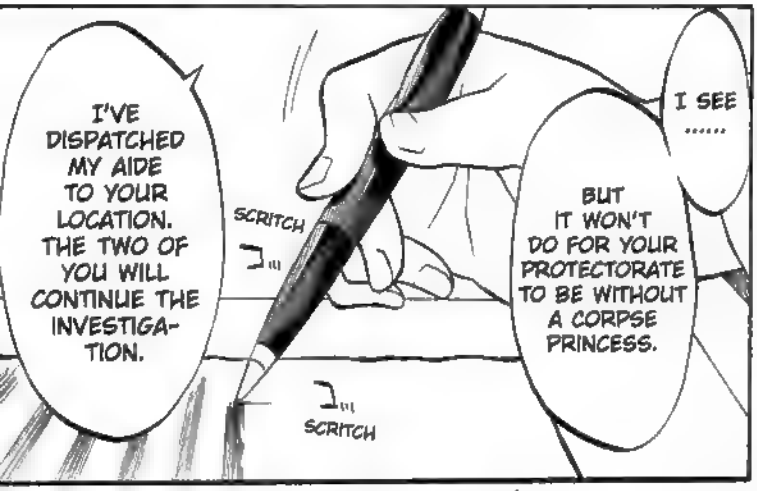
BOOK COVER: GOOD LUCK ADVICE


YOUR DEBUT .....
...IS IT?
YES, SHE'S ON THE VERGE OF DEATH, BROTHER.
YOU REALLY OUGHT TO HURRY AND GET HER HOME.
NOW THAT I'VE MADE MY DEBUT.
ぽたん
SNAP
YES.
I WISHED TO LEARN WHO HER CONTRACTING MONK IS.
AND I PRESUME MY INTENTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE CLEAR?

BOOK: GOOD LUCK ADVICE

WHEN HE ATTACKED THE HEAD TEMPLE, STOLE THE SUTRA...
...AND KILLED HIS OWN CORPSE PRINCESS .....
...I see.
HE..... AKASHA HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL.
NOT SINCE HE DISAP-PEARED FIVE YEARS AGO...
...for Corpse Prin-cesses.
For our sect... and...
He holds so much hate.....
NO.
SHE TOOK MORE DAMAGE THAN SHE COULD PROPERLY RECOVER FROM.
.....
Is your Corpse Prin-cess fit for duty?
Kei-sei ...
HMM?

RIGHT NOW SHE'S RESTING IN A SEAL I'VE CONSTRUCTED.


I'VE DISPATCHED MY AIDE TO YOUR LOCATION. THE TWO OF YOU WILL CONTINUE THE INVESTIGATION.
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
I SEE .....
BUT IT WON'T DO FOR YOUR PROTECTORATE TO BE WITHOUT A CORPSE PRINCESS.

...

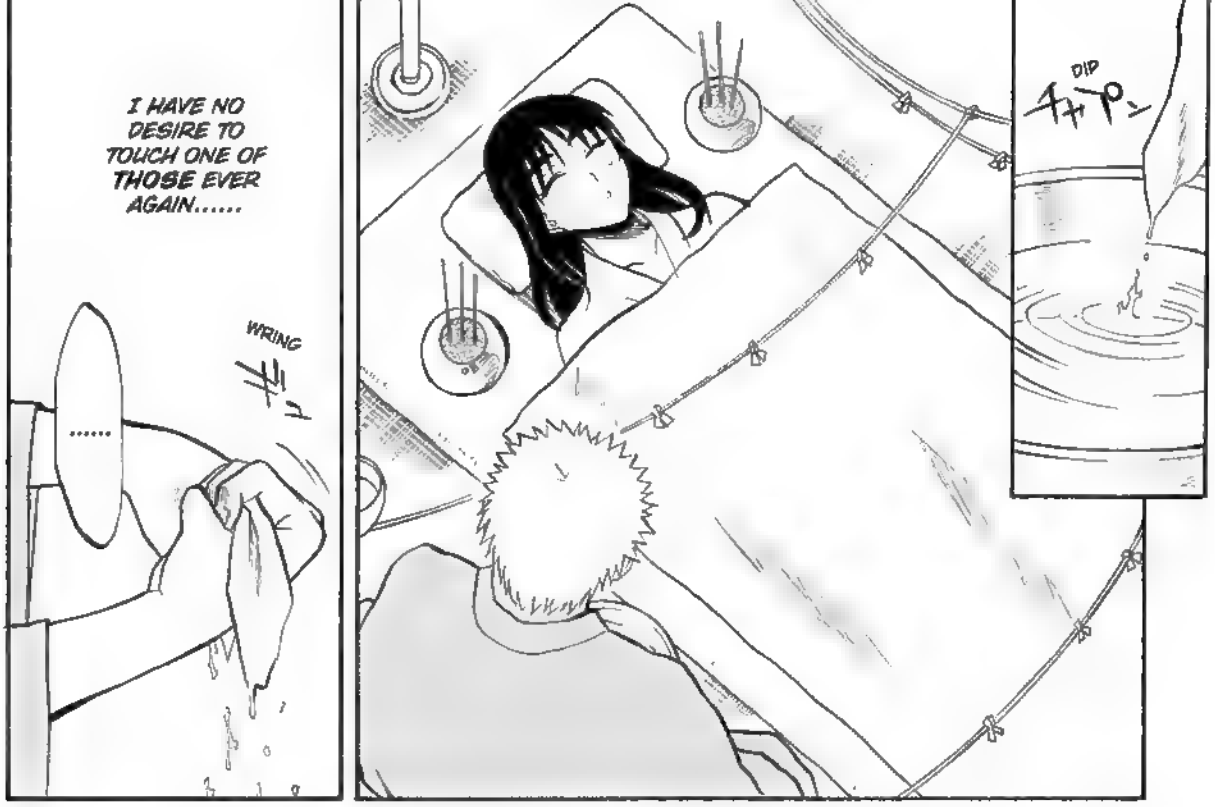
HMPH!
AND I'M ACTUALLY IN THE MIDDLE OF CLEANING UP FOR ALL THE TROUBLE-MAKERS AROUND HERE.
DON'T BE FOOLISH. UNLIKE YOU, I CAN'T JUST STROLL OUT OF HERE WHENEVER I PLEASE.
WHY ME...?
DON'T CRY, NOW.
BATTLE ON, SOUJOU-SAMA.
SIP
TEL

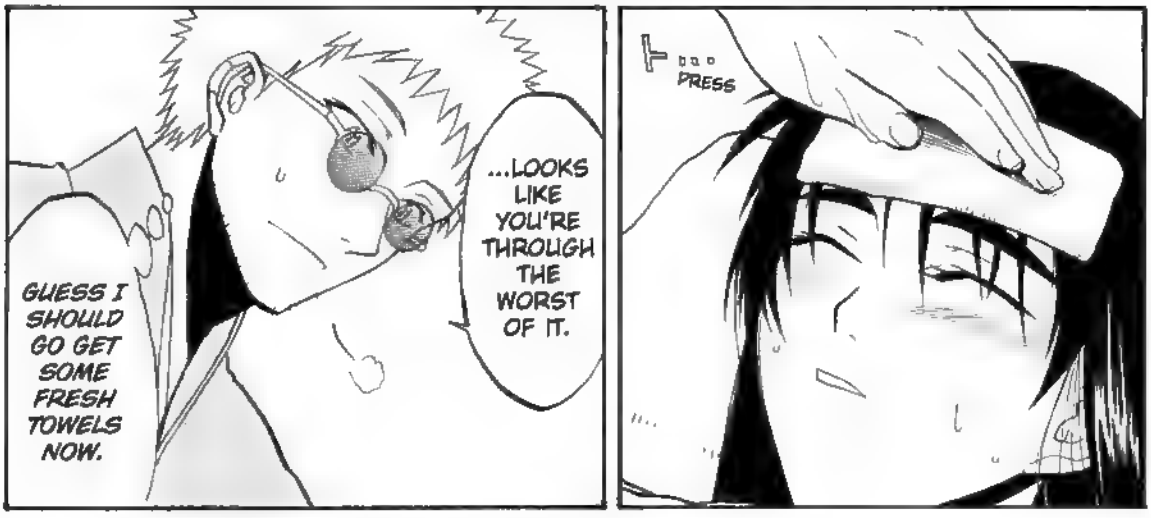
.....AIDE?
YOU HAVE ONE OF THOSE?
Mm-hm. As for who it is? That's a secret until they arrive.
KU-KU-KU.
...WHY ACT SO CREEPY ABOUT IT?

KAMI-KA'S THE STRONGEST CORPSE PRINCESS OUT THERE.
ANYWAY... WHY DON'T YOU JUST COME ON OVER YOURSELF, OLD MAN?

So naturally HIS hatred would extend to you.
You care for your Corpse Princess far more than is required of you.
But now you know what you must do...
Join with the monk I've dispatched and continue the work.
MM... RIGHT.
STOMP
...!!
WAIT!! AKA-SHA!!
WHAT IS IT, BROTHER?
YOU WISH TO FIGHT ME HERE AND NOW?
WOULD YOU ABANDON HER, IN THAT STATE?
...!

MAKINA.....
.....!!
!!
SPLURT
KAH... AH.
AHH...
-COFF-
TWITCH
.....
HMPH...
WHY NOT FINISH MAKINA OFF?
...WHY?
FIRST, I WANTED TO KNOW THE IDENTITY OF HER CONTRACTING MONK.
SECOND, KILLING HER WOULD "BOND" ME TO HER CONTRACTING MONK, AND I WOULD BE PURSUED.
FOR THREE REASONS, BROTHER.
THIRD.
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO TOUCH ONE OF THOSE EVER AGAIN.


I HAVE NO DESIRE TO TOUCH ONE OF THOSE EVER AGAIN.....
WRING
.....
DIP


GUESS I SHOULD GO GET SOME FRESH TOWELS NOW.
...LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THROUGH THE WORST OF IT.
PRESS

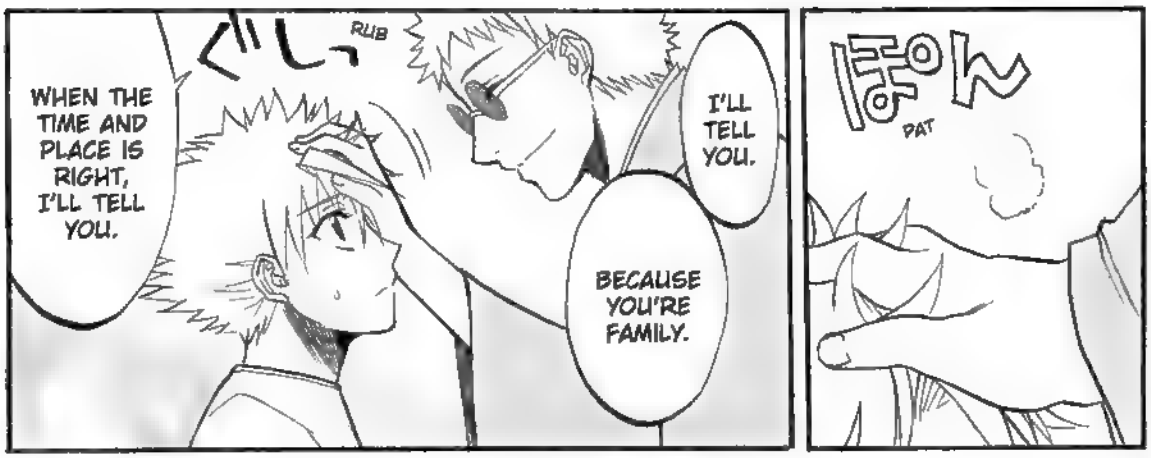
WHOA !?
BADUM
RAGE
YOU !!
CLUNK

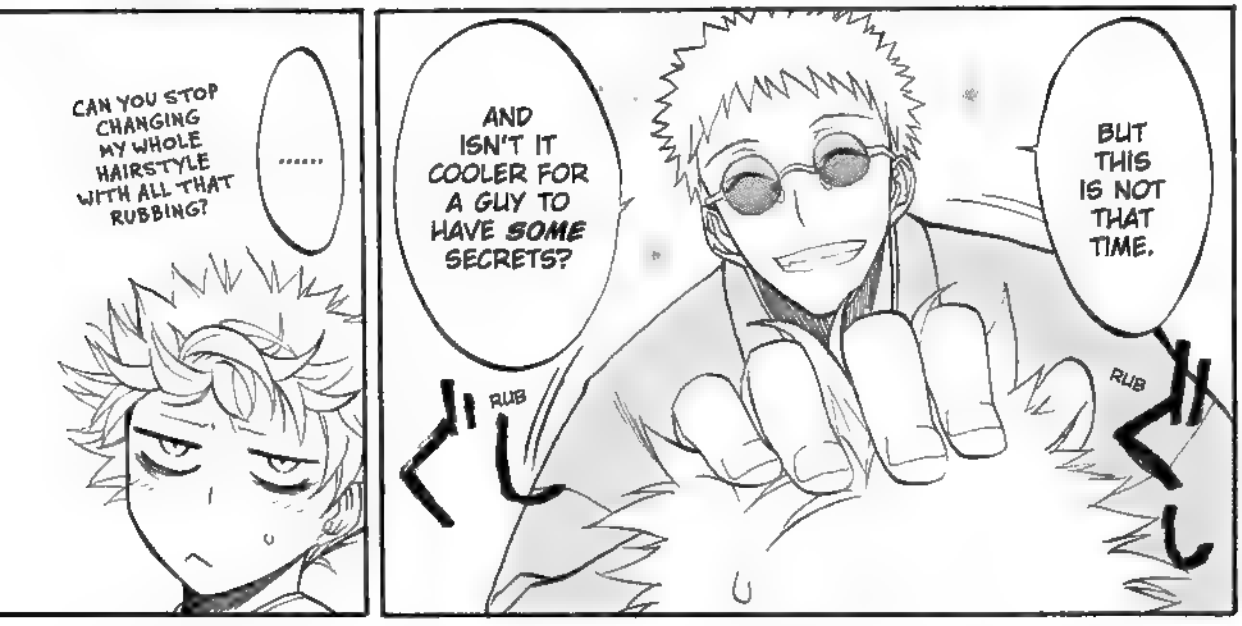
DID YOU TAKE THIS DIRTY MAG— THAT I HAD NO KNOWL-EDGE OF—...
IS THIS YOUR DOING !?
GLARE
...WRITE MY NAME ON IT, AND STICK IT IN THE COMMON AREA!?
SUSPICIOUS
WHAT'S UP, OURI? ...THAT IS TO SAY, HOW LONG YOU BEEN THERE?
H-
HEY...
...? I JUST GOT HERE...
...BUT BIG BRO!!

WHY LEAVE IT OUT IN THE OPEN WHERE EVERYONE COULD SEE!?
THAT'S NOT IT!!!
IT'S GOT EVERYTHING FROM SAILORS OUTFITS TO HOUSEWIVES. WHAT? NOT KINKY ENOUGH FOR YOU?
I WAS DONE WITH IT, SO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT A CRACK.
AH... THAT?
COME ON.

...
UOHHHHHH!!
SHADDUP!!
WHETHER IT'S ONE OR TEN, WHAT'S THE DIFFER-ENCE?
OH, WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? LAST WEEK, RIKO (THE DIRECTOR) FOUND ONE OF YOUR MAGAZINES, DIDN'T SHE?
GRAB

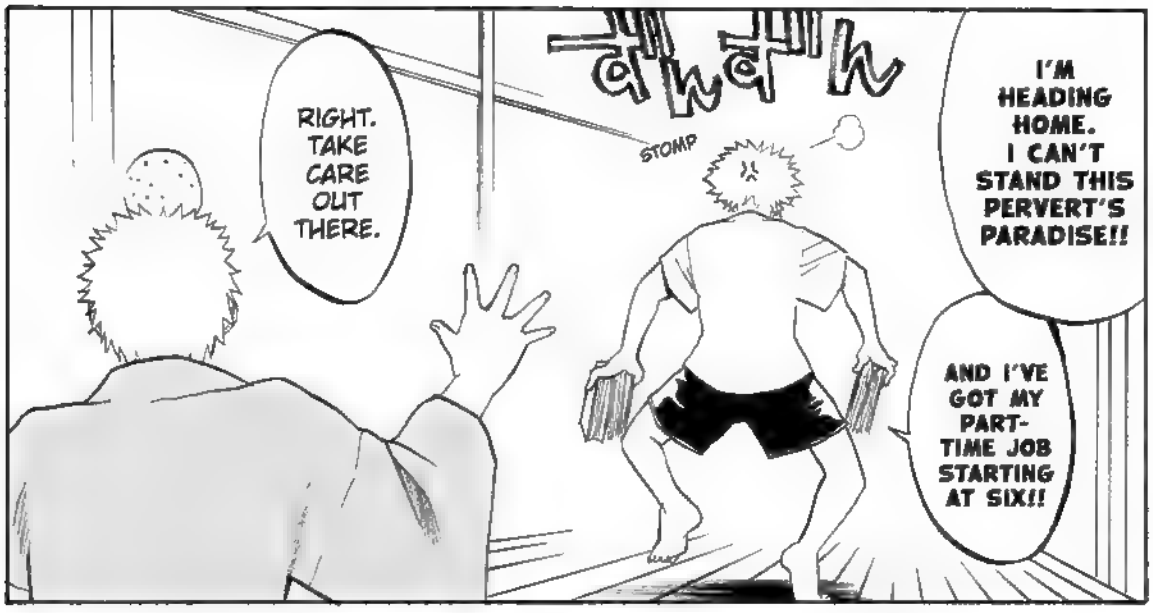
HEY.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR EAR?
AH... THIS?
I TRIED TO GIVE MYSELF A PIERCING AND SLIPPED UP. NO BIG DEAL.
.....
REALLY.
IT'S NOTHING.
.....
WHATEVER .....I WON'T ASK IF YOU'RE NOT TELLING.
.....BUT YOU KNOW, BIG BRO, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT.
SINCE WAY BACK.
YOU NEVER TELL ANYONE WHAT MATTERS MOST.
AND YOU TRY TO TAKE ON THE WORLD ALONE.


RUB
WHEN THE TIME AND PLACE IS RIGHT, I'LL TELL YOU.
I'LL TELL YOU.
BECAUSE YOU'RE FAMILY.
ぽん
PAT


CAN YOU STOP CHANGING MY WHOLE HAIRSTYLE WITH ALL THAT RUBBING?
.....
AND ISN'T IT COOLER FOR A GUY TO HAVE *SOME* SECRETS?
RUB
BUT THIS IS NOT THAT TIME.
RUB

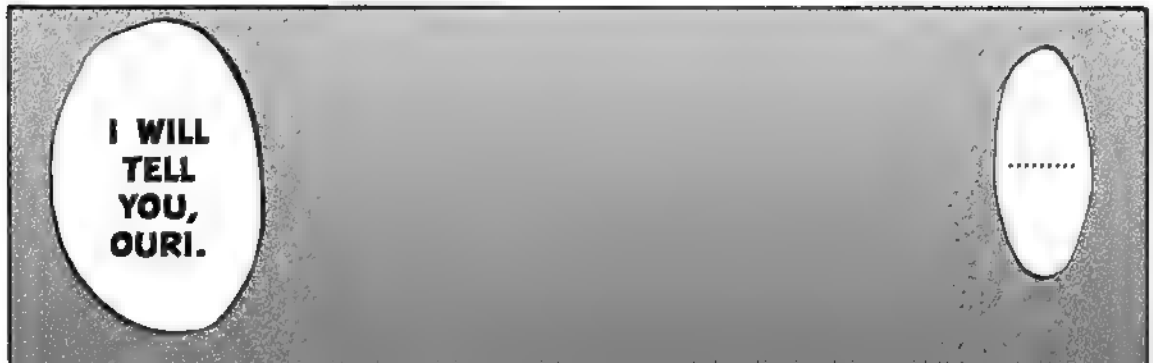
"I'LL ARRIVE AT SEKKU IN TWO HOURS." IT WAS A WOMAN.
SMOOTH
SMOOTH
OH... ALSO.
SOMEONE CALLED FOR YOU EARLIER.

POINT
YOU'RE YOUNG, AND I KNOW YOU TEND TO GET THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT THESE THINGS.
I WASN'T THINKING THAT AT ALL!!
WAIT! I SAID AIDE, NOT MAID, OURI. JUST HELPING WITH WORK.
SOME-ONE YOU KNOW ?
YEAH...THE OLD MAN MENTIONED THAT HE'S SENDING AN AIDE.


RIGHT. TAKE CARE OUT THERE.
STOMP
I'M HEADING HOME. I CAN'T STAND THIS PERVERT'S PARADISE!!
AND I'VE GOT MY PART-TIME JOB STARTING AT SIX!!

SIGH
WOW... THAT WAS CLOSE.

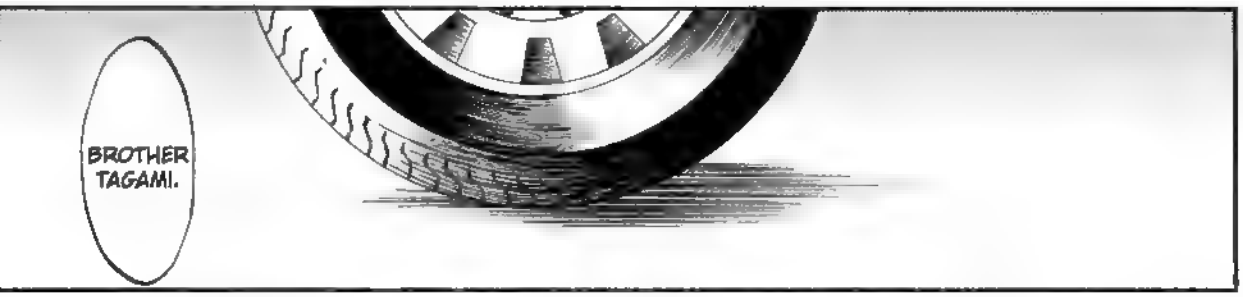
.....


I WILL TELL YOU, OURI.
.....

...I WILL TELL YOU.
WHEN THE TIME COMES...
BEFORE YOU'RE ALL FORCED TO GET INVOLVED .....
スゥ... BREATHE
...ISN'T A PAIN I CAN BEAR AGAIN.
BECAUSE LOSING FAMILY...

SORRY WE'RE LATE, BROTHER TAGAMI.
OH, RIKA!
GUESS YOU AND SAKI ARE MY HELPERS THEN.
TAKAMINE TOLD US EVERY-THING.
WE OFFER OUR HUMBLE SERVICES TO HELP YOU FIND THIS TRAITOR MONK AND THE SHIKABANE.
I SEE YOU'RE AS UPTIGHT AND FORMAL AS EVER ...
SWIF
IF YOU'RE THE OLD MAN'S AIDE, THEN I GUESS YOU'VE REACHED GON-SOUJOU LEVEL? THAT MAKES YOU MY SUPE-RIOR.
MONK RANKINGS AT-A-GLANCE
DAI-SOUJOU
V
GONDAI-SOUJOU
V
SOUJOU (TAKAMINE)
V
GON-SOUJOU (RIKA)
V
SHOU-SOUJOU (KEISEI)
V
AND SO ON

SO TRUE. AND WHAT SHE'D LIKE TO SAY IS, "YOU MORON!! YOU'RE LOWER THAN ME, SO DON'T ACT SO HIGH AND MIGHTY. IN FACT, GET ON YOUR KNEES AND LICK MY FEET."
MURMUR
SHOCK
WHAT A TER-RIBLE THING TO SAY, SAKI!!
IT'S FINE! I'M JUST SAYING WHAT YOU WON'T, RIKA.
I'D NEVER SAY...!! ...I MEAN, I'M NOT THINKING THAT!!
LIAR PANTS.
I SWEAR IT.
AH. THIS IS FEELING LIKE DÉJÀ VU.....
WITH RIKA IN THE ROLE OF OURI.


BROTHER TAGAMI.

CAN YOU UPDATE US ON THE SITUATION?
ANY IDEA WHERE THE TRAITOR, AKASHA, MIGHT BE?
...NO.
WE JUST HAVE TO SEARCH FOR ANY LIKELY SPIRITUAL HOTSPOTS.
HE'S BEEN CUNNING ENOUGH TO HIDE FROM US FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS.
SO IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKELY HE'S LEFT US A TRAIL TO FOLLOW.

"YOU'RE AS USELESS AS THOSE STUPID SUNGLASSES. I'D LIKE TO STRIP YOU DOWN AND SLAP YOU ALL OVER." ...RIGHT, RIKA?
SAKI !!
NO..... NOT AT ALL, BROTHER!!
IT'S FINE. I GET IT.
FLAIL
FLAIL
HEH-HEH.

BUT IT'S MOSTLY THANKS TO MY ARAGAMI FAMILY INFLUENCE..... HONESTLY, IT'S COMPLICATED.
.....
THANK YOU.

CONGRATS ON YOUR PROMOTION TO GON-SOUJOU, RIKA.
...AH.
THAT'S RIGHT..... I FORGOT TO SAY EARLIER, BUT...

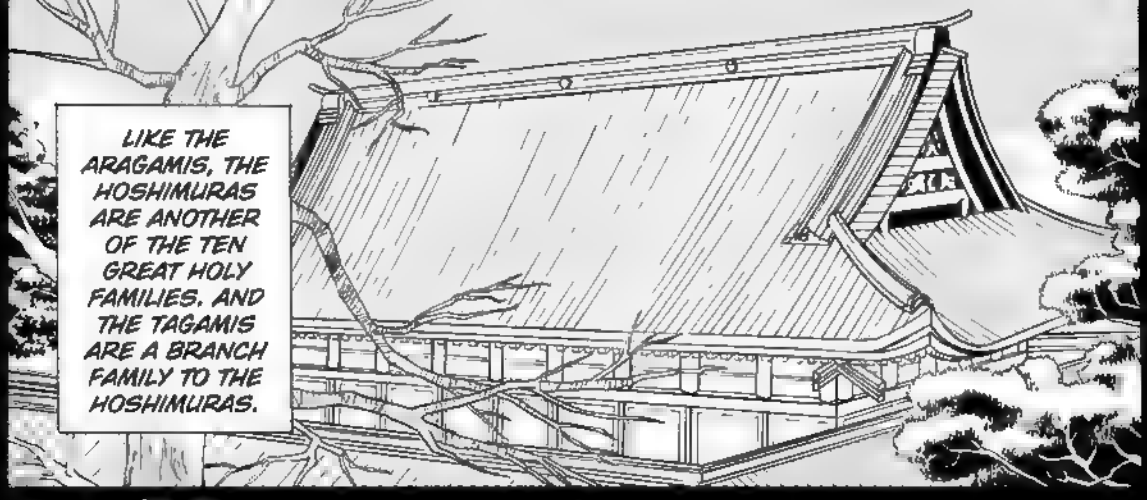
THE DESCENDANTS OF THE KOUGON SECT FOUNDER'S TEN TOP DISCIPLES STILL HOLD A LOT OF POWER IN THE ORGANI-ZATION.
YES...
THE TEN GREAT HOLY FAMI-LIES?

MY DUTY TO MY FAMILY, AS SAKI'S CONTRACTING MONK.....
...HOPING I CAN FULFILL MY DUTY PROPERLY.
AND I'M JUST ...

IT'S A POSITION ENTRUSTED ONLY TO THOSE DEEMED RESPONSIBLE ENOUGH. IT MEANS THEY EXPECT A LOT FROM YOU.
SAIKO
THE OLD MAN'S RECOG-NIZED YOUR POTENTIAL, RIKA.
.....
DON'T SELL YOUR-SELF SHORT.
NO GON-SOUJOU WOULD BE CHOSEN ON FAVORITISM ALONE.
SIGN: HAM
IN THE FIRST PLACE .....
ANY CONTRACTING MONK WITH A CORPSE PRINCESS HAS TO UNDERSTAND THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE POSITION.
HUH!?
MUST BE BECAUSE YOU AND SAKI ARE DOING SO WELL.
EVEN THOUGH SHE'S JUST ENJOYING HER-SELF...
GRIN
...YES.
BROTHER
BECAUSE ...
THEY'RE NOT JUST LIVING FOR THEMSELVES ANYMORE.
THEY CARRY A SECOND INDIVIDUAL'S FATE AS WELL.

NOTHING HERE. .....HOW ABOUT YOU?
... NO.
THERE'S NO TRACE OF THE TRAITOR THAT I CAN SEE.
SKRITCH
..... HMPH.
.....
SO NEXT, WE SHOULD ...
WE'VE CHECKED EVERY POTENTIAL LOCATION ON THE SPIRIT GIRD...
HMM ?
... ..... BROTHER.
ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID EARLIER ...
WHY DID YOU BECOME A CONTRACTING MONK, BROTHER?

I BECAME A CONTRACTING MONK TO FULFILL MY RESPONSI-BILITY TO MY FAMILY.
BUT ...
WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE PATH OF BATTLE, BROTHER?
TAKING ON A CORPSE PRINCESS COMES WITH PRIDE AND HONOR, BUT.....
...FOR THAT, A CONTRACTING MONK IS FORCED TO RISK HIS OR HER OWN LIFE.
NO!!
NO... THAT'S NOT IT...
RIGHT, RIKA?
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU'RE SUSPICIOUS THAT HIS LOVE FOR SAILOR UNIFORMS DROVE HIM TO IT.
..... RIGHT.
.....A PROMISE.
WHAT SORT?
SCRATCH
.....WELL, I HONESTLY DON'T HAVE SUCH A GREAT REASON.
YOU THINK SO LOW OF ME?
JUST A CERTAIN PROMISE.


LIKE THE ARAGAMIS, THE HOSHIMURAS ARE ANOTHER OF THE TEN GREAT HOLY FAMILIES. AND THE TAGAMIS ARE A BRANCH FAMILY TO THE HOSHIMURAS.

BAM

STOMP
STOMP
I LOST MY PARENTS EARLY ON, AND THE HOSHIMURAS TOOK ME IN AND RAISED ME.
H-HEY, KEISEI, GET IN HERE!!
THIS IS INCREDIBLE!!
...? WHAT IS IT?

AMAZING, HUH!? OUR LITTLE TWINS!!
THEY JUST CAME HOME TODAY.
.....YUP.
CUTE, HUH? BEYOND CUTE, EVEN... JUST.....SO DAMN CUTE!!
きゃ!! YAP
きゃ!! YAP
...WHAT!!?
BLUSH

SPARKLE
SPARKLE
SPARKLE
.....

THEY RAISED ME, AN ORPHAN, LIKE ONE OF THEIR OWN.
THEY WERE A GREAT FAMILY.

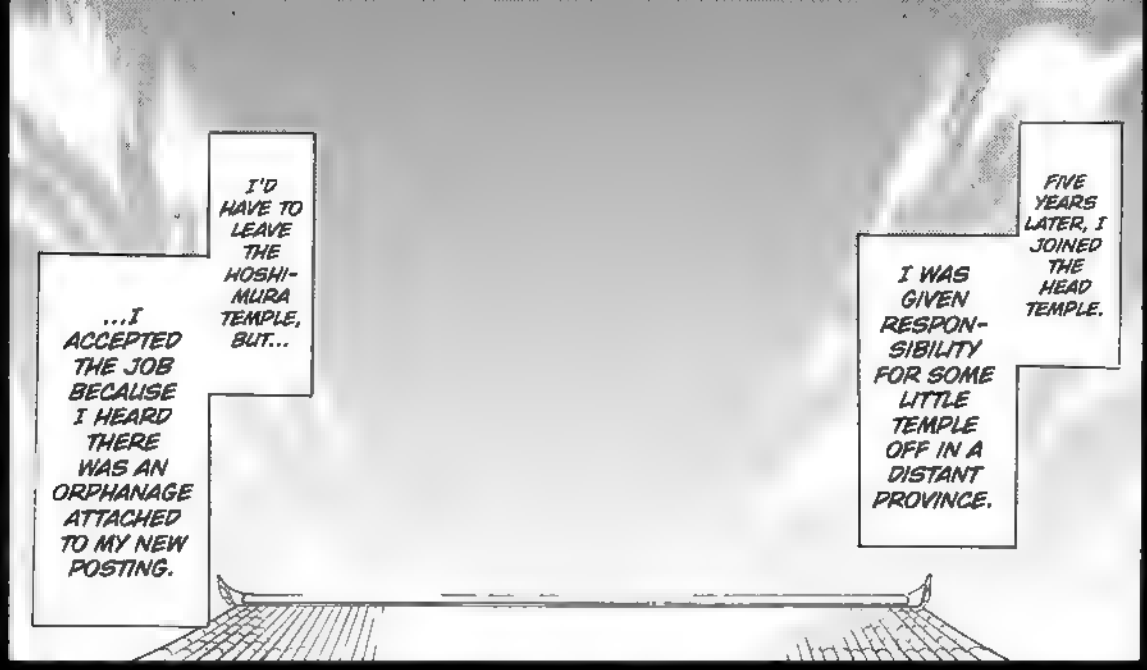
DON'T DROP THEM... IF YOU MAKE MY DAUGHTER CRY, EVEN A LITTLE ...
I'LL KILL YOU. GOT IT?
..... YUP.
BADUM

HERE. YOU TRY HOLDING THEM.
EH!?
WHOA... HOLD ON... THEY LOOK SO FRAGILE .....

...I WAS SURE THAT GIRL WOULD LIVE A HAPPY LIFE.
OOH, LOOK, THEY'RE MOVING.
YUP.
IN SUCH A BLESSED ENVIRON-MENT, SHE'D BE RAISED RIGHT.....

WHOA
HER HANDS... SO TINY.

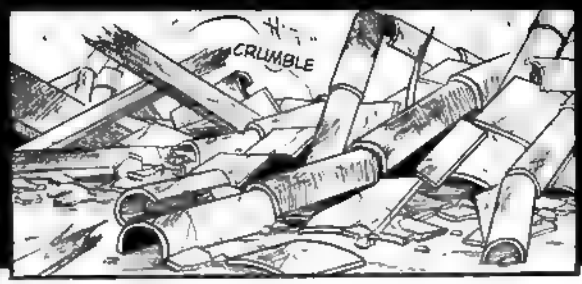
AT THE TIME ...


FIVE YEARS LATER, I JOINED THE HEAD TEMPLE.
I WAS GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOME LITTLE TEMPLE OFF IN A DISTANT PROVINCE.
I'D HAVE TO LEAVE THE HOSHIMURA TEMPLE, BUT...
...I ACCEPTED THE JOB BECAUSE I HEARD THERE WAS AN ORPHANAGE ATTACHED TO MY NEW POSTING.

WE'LL MISS YOU, BUT ALL CHICKS GOTTA LEAVE THE NEST SOONER OR LATER.
WORK HARD, NOW.
AND DROP BY TO SEE THE KIDS ONCE IN A WHILE.
.....SURE.
IN THE END ...

SIGN: SEKKU TEMPLE
TEN YEARS LATER ...
I FELT I'D MADE SOME REAL PROGRESS, BUT JUST AS I WAS GOING TO RETURN HOME FOR A VISIT, I FOUND OUT...
MY ASSIGNED TEMPLE WAS LAUGHABLY RUN DOWN.
...I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING BOTH THE TEMPLE AND THE ORPHANAGE, AND I HAD MY HANDS FULL RESTORING THEM.
寺空世
WOMP
どぉーん
...WE STAYED IN TOUCH, BUT I WOULD NEVER PASS THROUGH THE HOSHIMURAS' GATES AGAIN.

THE HOSHIMURA RESIDENCE WAS ATTACKED BY SHIKABANE AND COMPLETELY DESTROYED.



STEP
MASTER .....!
YOU'RE LATE, KEISEI.
STEP
TO THE REAR STORE-HOUSE. COME QUICKLY.

THE HOSHIMURA GIRL HAS THE APTITUDE FOR THAT.
SO I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HER CON-TRACTING MONK.

.....!
BUT ...!
I'VE DECIDED TO ALLOCATE HER TO YOU. YOU'RE THE MOST SUITABLE CANDIDATE.
THERE'S NO TIME TO EXPLAIN.
..... WHAT !?
WHAT'S GOING ON, OLD MAN .....!?

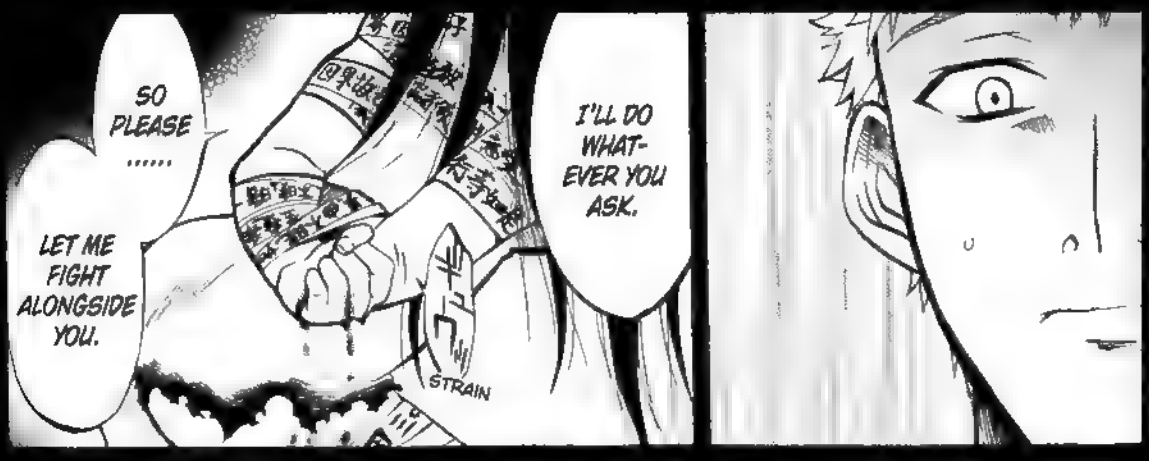
THE CONTRACT MUST BE MADE AT ONCE.
WE'VE BOUND HER IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP HER FROM TURNING INTO A SHIKA-BANE.
RIGHT NOW, HER RAGE AND DESPAIR ARE CAUSING HER TO LASH OUT.

KEISEI.
SO CHOOSE ...

ONLY YOU CAN FORM THIS CONTRACT.
...IT MUST BE NOW!!
IF SHE IS TO MAINTAIN ANY SEM-BLANCE OF HER TRUE SELF...

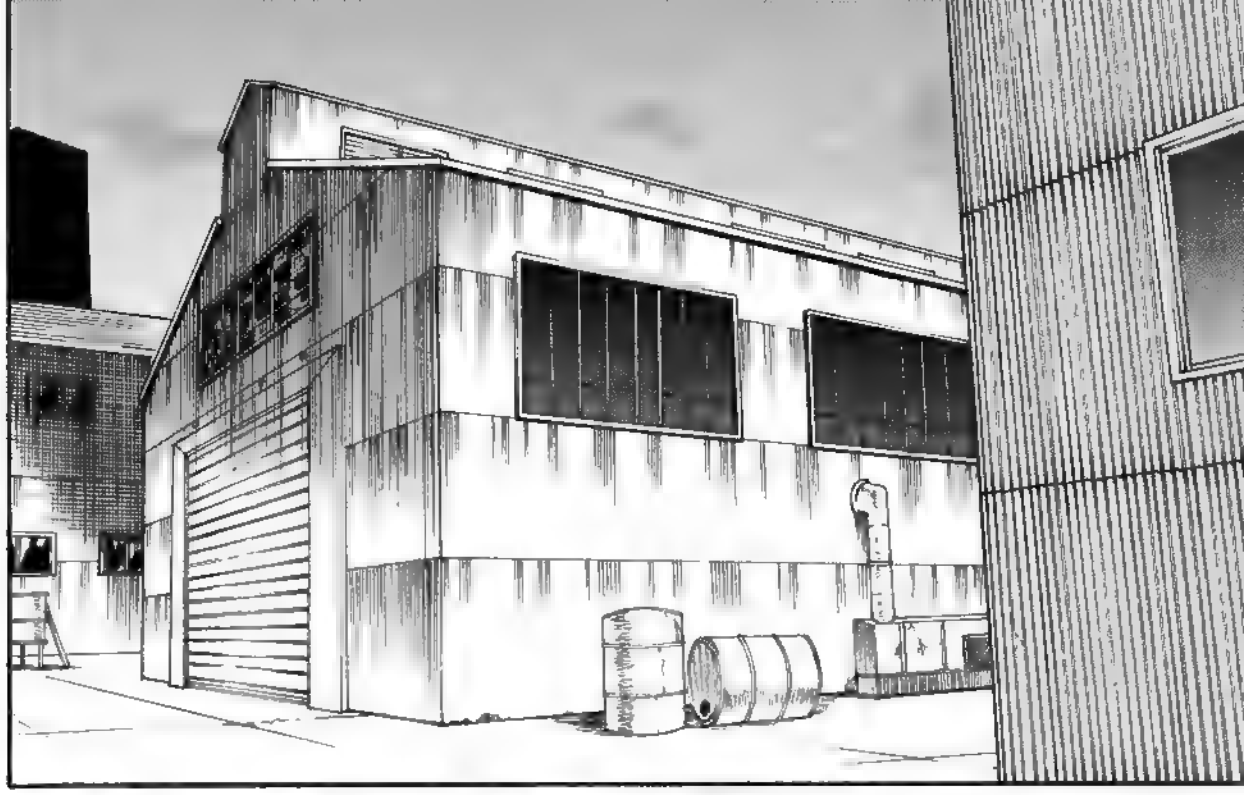
CREAK

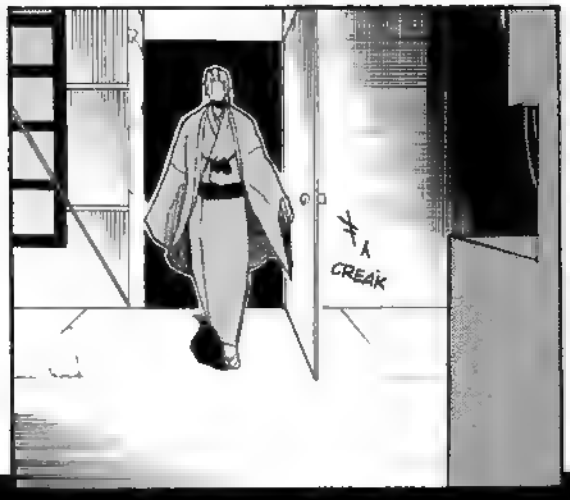
PLEASE ...
FORM A CONTRACT WITH ME .....


SO PLEASE .....
LET ME FIGHT ALONGSIDE YOU.
I'LL DO WHAT-EVER YOU ASK.
STRAIN

THOSE WHO KILLED MY ENTIRE FAMILY...
THAT WAS OUR RE-UNION.
I NEED TO FIGHT THEM AND KILL THEM.....!

BECAUSE IT'S SO SAD, OF COURSE.
SNIFFLE
TO THINK THAT YOU AND SHE WOULD SHARE SUCH A PAST, BROTHER.
WHIMPER
HIC
えぐ
WHY THE WATER-WORKS, RIKA!?
... SO ...
IT'S NOT LIKE THIS "PROMISE" WAS ESPECIALLY ROMANTIC OR ANY-THING.....
..... H-HEY!!
EHH!?
WHAT DIRTY THING IS HE PLANNING...?
KEH-KEH-KEH. NOW TAGAMI'S THINKING, "I DIDN'T THINK THIS CHICK WOULD BE SO EASY TO FOOL..."
SAKI !!
TWITCH
R-RIGHT.
SOUNDS GOOD.
THANKS.
GWAH
CLENCH
IF WE CATCH THAT TRAITOR MONK, PERHAPS WE CAN SQUEEZE INFORMA-TION ABOUT SHIKABANE OUT OF HIM!!
I'LL..... HELP YOU WITH ALL I'VE GOT!!
...OH.
GREAT.
NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES ...!!
WE'RE GOING TO SMOKE THAT TRAITOR OUT OF HIS DEN!!
I'VE DECIDED.
SLAM




CREAK

...NOW THEN.
THERE WERE TRACES OF BODIES, BUT.....
...WHERE COULD THEY HAVE RUN OFF TO, ROGERE-SAN?

I DEAL WITH THE *LIVING*. THAT'S MY SPECIALTY.
SEARCHING FOR THE DEAD AND ALL THAT TRIVIAL BUSINESS IS YOUR JOB.
STEP
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?
DON'T ASK ME.
SIGH
...YES, YES.
OF COURSE.
KEEP IN MIND THAT EACH WILL BE STRONG *AND* LOYAL ...
...WHAT AN ANNOYING PLACE JAPAN IS.
TO THINK WE HAVE TO START BY SEARCHING FOR BODIES WITH LINGERING GRUDGES.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE SWELL OUR RANKS, YOU AND I STILL HAVE OUR LIMITS.
DON'T LOOK AT IT THAT WAY.
MORE THAN ANY-THING ...
BUT WHAT ABOUT WHEN THEY'RE KILLED OFF, LIKE EARLIER?
WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT ALL?

AH... RIGHT.
OUR COMMANDER IS PRETTY PARTICULAR ABOUT THAT, I GUESS...
...SUCH LOW QUALITY GRUNTS WILL HARDLY SERVE TO CONVINCE...
...
HIM.
.....
THAT'S ...
?
WHAT IS IT?

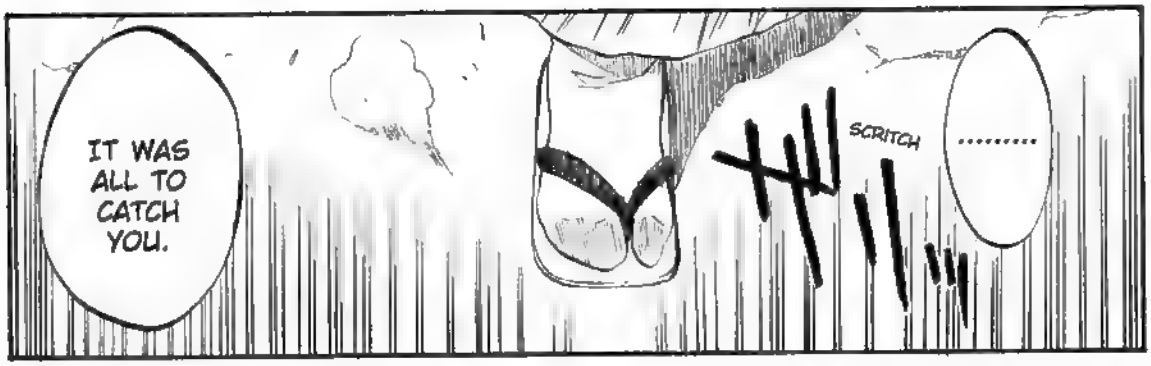
THIS DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT .....
HOW ODD..... SHE'S DEFINITELY BECOME A SHIKABANE, BUT.....
TWITCH
YES...
IS THAT...
...THE BODY YOU'VE BEEN TRACKING?
GLANCE
!!

SLASH

OH?
FWIP
DON'T MOVE.
TWIST

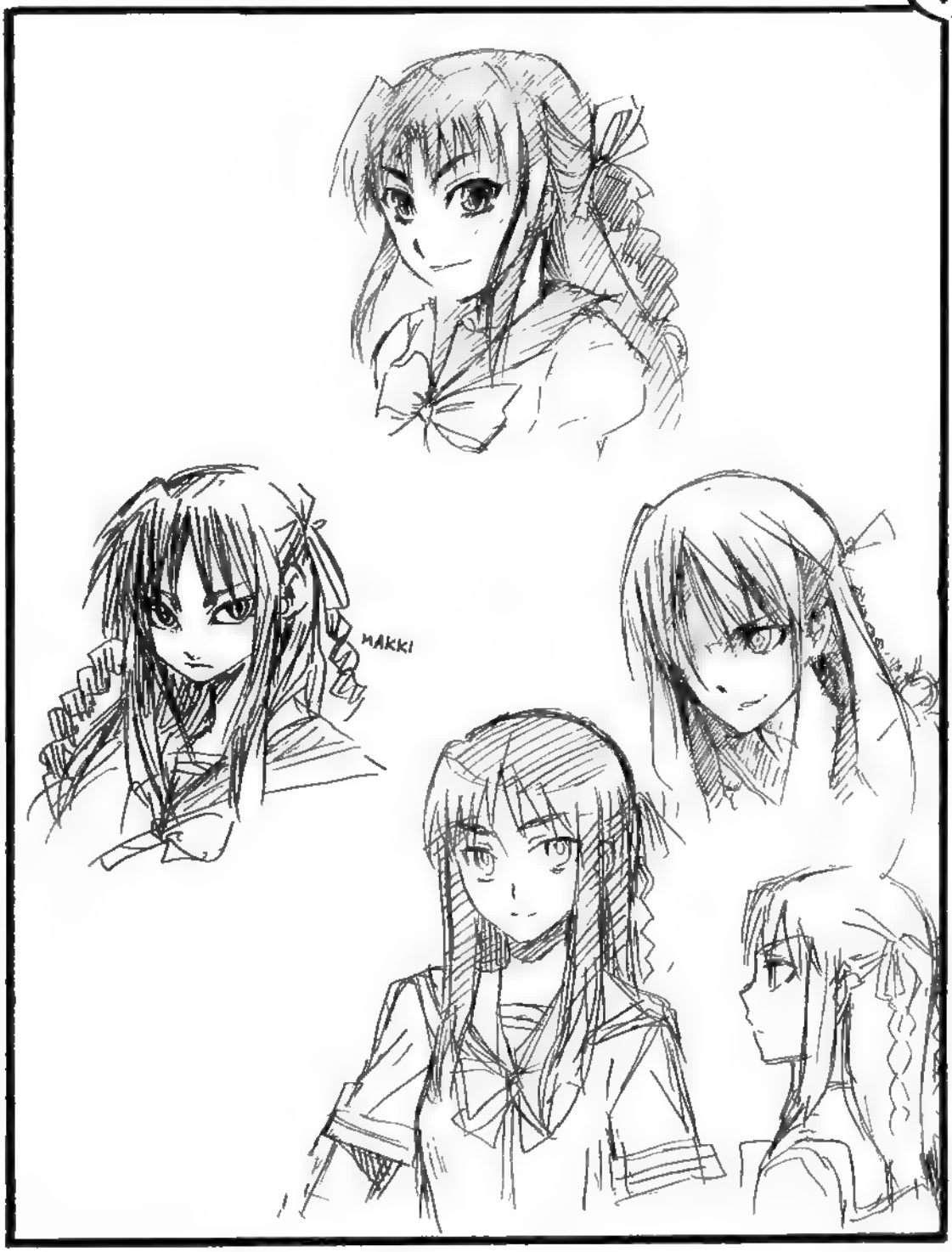
GOT YOU GOOD ...
HAA
FU FU.
.....
HAA.
SWING
FLAP

WHAT AN AWFUL THING TO DO.
WIPE
YOU DRESSED UP A CORPSE PRINCESS AS A SHIKABANE. YOU MADE HER BAIT FOR ME.
I SEE.


IT WAS ALL TO CATCH YOU.
SCRITCH
.....

KACHAK
AKASHA SHISHI-DOU.
I'M TAKING YOU BACK TO THE HEAD TEMPLE.

# SKETCH-FROM-MEMORY SERIES 1




MAKINA SKETCHES DRAWN BY MY ASSISTANTS

DEATH 6:
THE UNCLEAN BUNCH
BROTHER.
WHAT AN AWFUL THING TO DO.
DISGUISING A CORPSE PRINCESS AS A SHIKA-BANE MEANS TEMPORARILY SEVERING THE "BOND" WITH HER CONTRACTING MONK.....
BUT...
I EXPECT IT COMES WITH A GREAT DEAL OF PAIN.
FOR THE CORPSE PRINCESS, CUTTING THAT BOND IS LIKE TAKING A FISH OUT OF WATER.
FORCING A YOUNG GIRL TO DO SUCH A THING.....

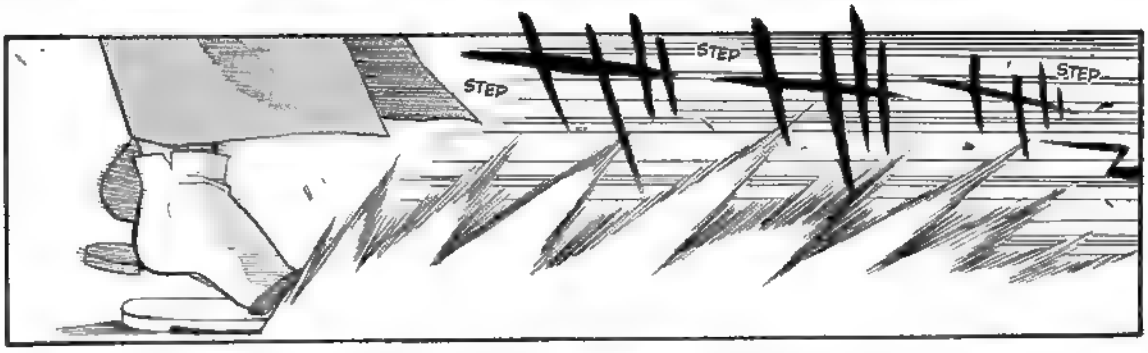
# DEATH 6: THE UNCLEAN BUNCH

ANY-WAY ...
WE GOT YOU, SO YOU'RE IN NO PLACE TO SAY ANYTHING.
TOSS
OUR "BOND" WASN'T COM-PLETELY SEVERED.
JUST WEAKENED ENOUGH TO FOOL YOU.
... HAA.
RIP
WHOOSH
MY SENSE OF CAUTION HAS DULLED DURING MY LONG SEQUESTER ...
I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
...I SEE.
!!
KAKLANG

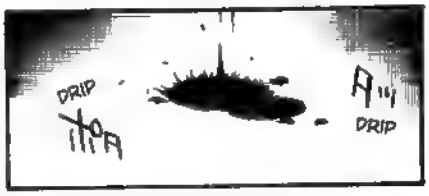
NO NEED.
GRIND
GRIND
IF YOU WANNA TALK .....
...DO IT AT THE HEAD TEMPLE.
..... BROTHER ...
GRIND
SHOULDN'T YOU AT LEAST LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY?
SLICE

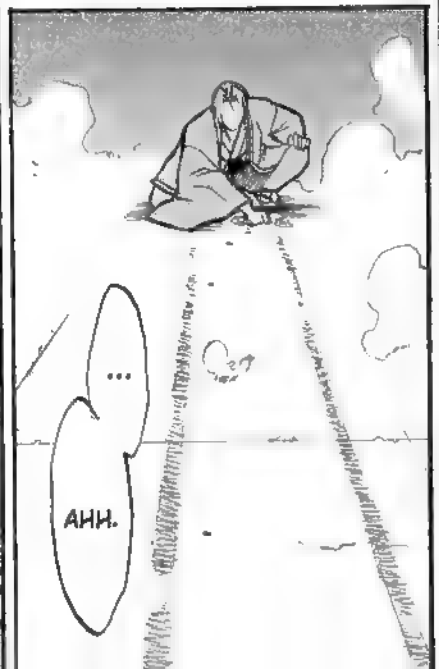
WHAM

KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
GRIND


STEP
STEP
STEP

MY SANKO-SHO IS RUINED.
LICK
IT WAS HOME-MADE, SO IT REQUIRED QUITE A BIT OF TIME AND MONEY.


DRIP
DRIP


...
AHH.

WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU'VE BEEN MAKING SHIKA-BANE BUT FORGOT TO KEEP UP YOUR OWN TRAINING?

SORRY ABOUT THAT.
AFTER WE'VE TAKEN YOU IN...
...WE'LL HAVE TO FIND YOU ANOTHER.
NOW .....
FWIP
WORRY NOT.
RUSTLE
I PREFER TO USE ONLY THOSE THAT I'VE MADE MYSELF.
UNFURL
IN A WAY.....IT SEEMS A WASTE TO USE THIS, BUT...
...IT'S ALL FOR NAUGHT IF I'M DEFEATED HERE.
UNFURL
!
A SUTRA ...

SLAM
FLAP
UNFURL, MY SEALED MAN-DALA.
RAKSHASA OF EVIL.
FWOOM
"BIZARRE LOTUS."

HEY, YOUNG MISS.
!
LEAVE THE FIGHTING TO THEM. WHY DON'T YOU AND I GET FRIENDLY?
.....
NO GOOD.
IF YOU'RE ALSO INVOLVED WITH THE SHIKABANE, THEN YOU'RE COMING TO HEAD-QUARTERS TOO.
SQUEEZE
BESIDES WHICH, I'VE CAUGHT YOU, SO YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO NEGOTIATE.
FLIRTING WON'T WORK ON ME.
OW, OW, OW.
HA HA ...
GOOD... SO STRONG-WILLED
I LIKE WOMEN LIKE THAT.
SQUEEZE
BUT YOU LEAVE ME WITH NO CHOICE .....
YOU'LL HAVE TO PARDON MY USE OF FORCE...
..... ALL RIGHT?

!
...
RUSTLE
PWUMP
SOMETHING'S IN MY SLEEVE.....
...WHAT THE...?
IT'S... MOVING UP.....
!!
SQUIRM
RUSTLE
SQUIRM
RUSTLE
SQUIRM
DRIP

GIII
...
PRESS
PRESS
AH...
OH...
AH.
...
AH.
SLINK
WHAT
!?
!!
UGH
.....
GUH
...
SCRATCH

WHAM
WHOOSH

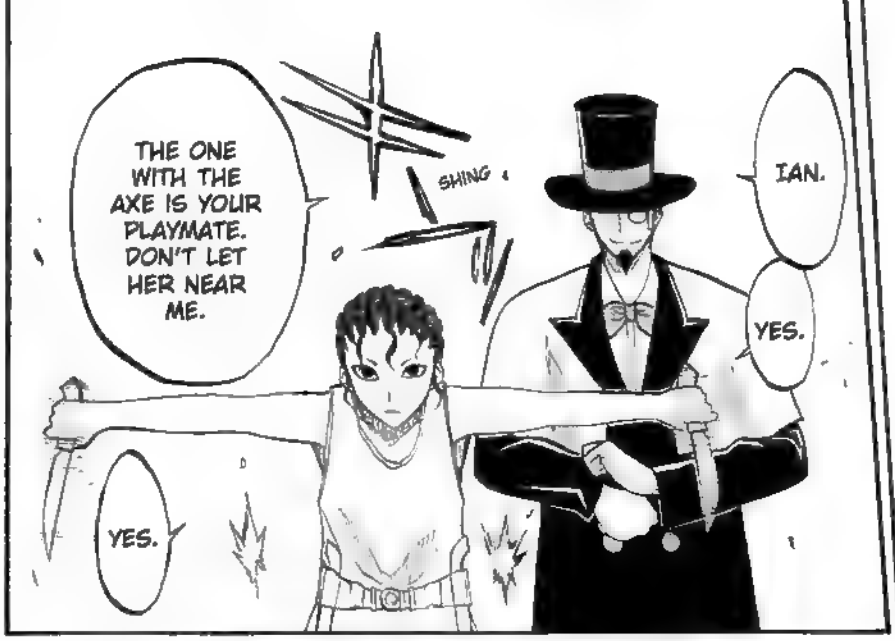
SWF

.....
ACK
...
KAH
.....
COUGH

WHOA
!!
SLAM
WHOOSH

A GIANT AXE ....
WHERE WAS SHE HIDING THAT?
STEP
ONE DIRECT HIT FROM THAT, AND I'M DEAD ...
SHE GOT MY FORELOCK.
TCH. SO CLOSE...
KAKLUNK
AH.
YEAH .....
YOU OKAY, RIKA?
CHAK
... WHAT WAS THAT...?
SO...
STEP
THIS WOUND IS REAL.....
NOTHING THERE... BUT.....
WIPE

I PRIMARILY SPECIALIZE IN HUMANS, YOU SEE.
AND I'M NOT MUCH OF A FIGHTER MYSELF.
BUT YOU'VE GIVEN ME NO CHOICE.
FWIP
TUG
WHAT A SHAME.
ONLY A BIT LONGER AND...
COME OUT.
IAN.


THE ONE WITH THE AXE IS YOUR PLAYMATE. DON'T LET HER NEAR ME.
SHING
IAN.
YES.
YES.
WHAT .....?
A CHILD..... FROM INSIDE HIS COAT...?

SAKI !!
NO NEED TO SAY ALL THAT !!
KU-KU-KU-KU... ﾌﾌﾌ....
OH..... YOU'VE GOT A GOOD EYE.
RIKA MAY SEEM UNAPPROACHABLE AT FIRST GLANCE, BUT UNDERNEATH IT ALL, SHE'S A MEEK, OBEDIENT WARRIOR WITH SOME GREAT D-CUPS.

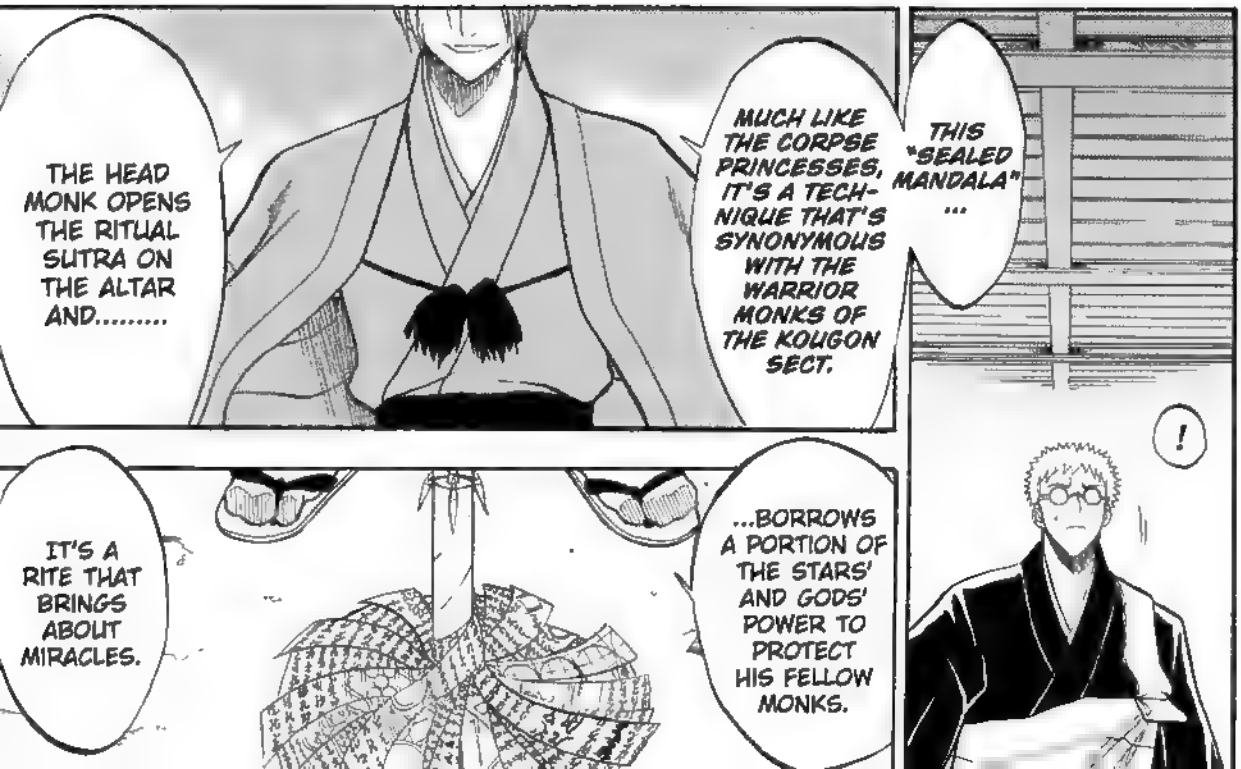
LICK
BECAUSE I'M INTERESTED IN THE YOUNG MISS.
I'D LIKE TO ENJOY HER FIRST.

WHAT A SHAME.
KU-KU-KU.
STEP
THESE CLOTHES ARE JUST HOW MY GOD DOES THINGS. THEY CAN'T BE CHANGED.

I'M SORRY.
BUT OUR STYLES DON'T MATCH UP.
I REFUSE.

THE AIR IN HERE'S GOTTEN THICK .....
SWIRL
SWIRL
SUCH PRESSURE, AND ALL HE'S DONE IS OPEN THAT MANDALA ...

WHAT DO I DO .....? TRY GETTING CLOSER .....?
THE POWER OF THAT SUTRA .....?
HE'S SO CONFI-DENT... BUT WHY?


THE HEAD MONK OPENS THE RITUAL SUTRA ON THE ALTAR AND.....
MUCH LIKE THE CORPSE PRINCESSES, IT'S A TECH-NIQUE THAT'S SYNONYMOUS WITH THE WARRIOR MONKS OF THE KOUGON SECT.
THIS "SEALED MANDALA" ...
!
IT'S A RITE THAT BRINGS ABOUT MIRACLES.
...BORROWS A PORTION OF THE STARS' AND GODS' POWER TO PROTECT HIS FELLOW MONKS.

BLUB
BLUB
WITH IT, I'VE FAR EXCEEDED THE TABOOS OF FIVE YEARS AGO.
BLUB
MY SEALED MANDALA, ENHANCED BY THE SUTRA I STOLE...
BUT BROTHER ...

HAA!
BURST
AHH.

I CAN PRESERVE THE CURSES OF SHIKABANE I'VE KILLED MYSELF ...
...AND SEAL THEM IN HERE FOR LATER USE...
THIS GIRL.....
SHE'S THAT CURSED ONE.....
!!

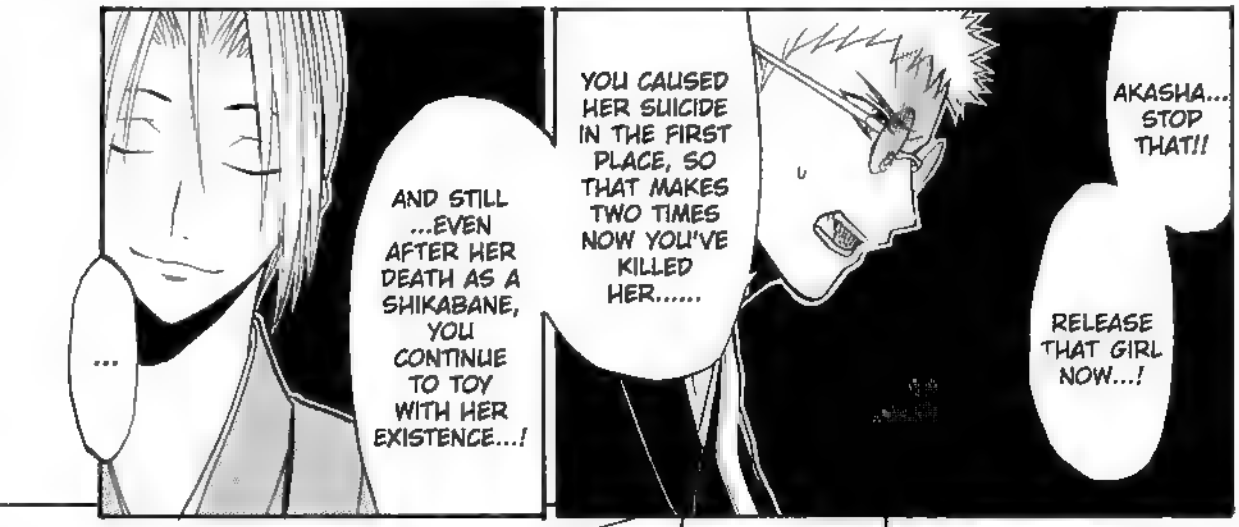
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
Ah...
THIS IS...
BAM
...MY "BIZARRE LOTUS."
...
Y-YOU ...
AKA-SHA .....
GRIND
I'M ACTUALLY AT EASE NOW.
BUT BROTHER ...
STOMP
BUT IT'S NEVER-THELESS A FINE WAY TO RECYCLE OLD GARBAGE.
OF COURSE ...
THESE ARE NOT CURSES BORN OF MY OWN REGRETS, SO THEY LACK IN POTENCY.
ALL THOSE SHIKABANE HANDS AND HEADS...
ARRANGED LIKE A LOTUS FLOWER...

CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
WHEN I OPEN MY BIZARRE LOTUS AND WITNESS THE PAINED FACES OF THESE SHIKABANE ...
...ONLY THEN AM I AT PEACE.

DON'T GET RILED. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS...
!!
...
BADUM
CRUNCH
..... SO WHY ARE YOU GATHERING SHIKABANE ?
ISN'T THAT AT ODDS WITH YOUR IDEALS?

STOMP
BUT THE REASON I'VE CHOSEN THIS PATH ...
...IS BECAUSE IT'S THE SHORTEST ONE TO MY GOAL.
YES, I DESPISE SHIKABANE. JUST AS I DESPISE CORPSE PRINCESSES.
SMILE
...I SUP-POSE SO.

...THOSE SHIKABANE WHO FAIL MY SCREENING BECOME FODDER FOR MY SEALED MANDALA. IT'S OSTENSIBLY TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE.
PRESS
BUT, WELL .....
STOP IT...
AKA-SHA ...!
HIS GOAL.....? NO, MORE IMPORTANTLY .....


...
AND STILL ...EVEN AFTER HER DEATH AS A SHIKABANE, YOU CONTINUE TO TOY WITH HER EXISTENCE...!
YOU CAUSED HER SUICIDE IN THE FIRST PLACE, SO THAT MAKES TWO TIMES NOW YOU'VE KILLED HER.....
AKASHA... STOP THAT!!
RELEASE THAT GIRL NOW...!

TCH !!
!!
STEP
SHIFT
YOU ARE AS FULL OF COM-PASSION AS EVER, BROTHER.
...IS THAT WHY...
...YOU REFUSE EVEN TO LET A SHIKABANE WHO FOUGHT AGAINST YOU SUFFER?
FWOOM

FWIP
AH, YOU'VE SNAPPED.
!!
TCH
CLANG
SHING
SPLASH
TMP
TCH!
THOSE PELLETS WERE FILLED WITH SUPPRESSIVE ADHESION STRINGS, DESIGNED TO HALT YOUR MOVE-MENTS.
STRAIN
!?
BIND
WHAT .....?
FWIP
IT'S NO USE.
THIS IS HOW THOSE OF US WITHOUT UNDEAD SHIELDS FIGHT, BROTHER.

BURST
?!
SLICE
SPLURT
BADUM
I'VE LOST TOO MUCH BLOOD TO GRIP IT.....!
MY BLADE SLIPPED OUT OF MY HAND.....
TUG
CLANG

SO IF HE RECEIVES EVEN THE SLIGHTEST WOUND...
THAT'S THE NATURE OF THIS "BOND"...
IT'S HER CURSE.
YOU REMEMBER IT, DON'T YOU?
IT RETURNS ALL INFLICTED PAIN TO A "BONDED" TARGET.
LIFT
PIERCE
SO INCONVENIENT, HUMANS.
UNLIKE CORPSE PRINCESSES, THEIR WOUNDS DON'T HEAL VERY QUICKLY.
SWING
GAH !!
AHH ...
THUD
AND ONCE YOU CUT THEIR HEADS OFF...
... THERE'S NO COMING BACK.
CHIK
SLAM

DON'T WORRY, BROTHER.
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO TURN SOME UNDEAD-LOVING HUMAN INTO A SHIKABANE.
SO YOU CAN REST IN PEACE.
.....
SO THAT'S YOUR REASON.....?
YOU BETRAYED THE KOUGON SECT...
...BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T BEAR TO LOOK AT YOUR OWN CORPSE PRINCESS ...?
I DID NOT BETRAY THE KOUGON SECT.
SQUEEZE
NO, BROTHER.
.....
FWOOM
...BETRAYED ME.
BREATHE
THE KOUGON SECT...

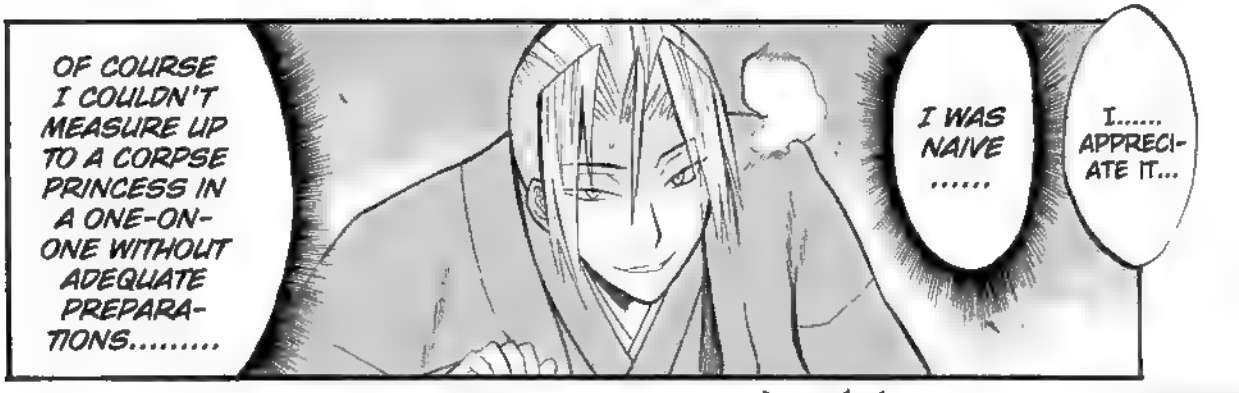
LOOM
LEAP

ABOVE !!
TCH ...
SWING
FWOOSH
CRACK
STEP
STEP
STEP
TCH !!
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
!!
TMP
.....SPEAKING OF WHICH ...
I HAD NEARLY FORGOT-TEN.
JUST HOW COURAGEOUS AND LOYAL ...
...THE DOGS OF THE KOUGON SECT ARE.

HAA.
BAM
BUT MAKINA !!
YOU'RE IN NO STATE TO BE UP AND ABOUT!!
SCRITCH
RIP
RIP
THAT WAS CLOSE, KEISEI...
HFF
ANY-WAY..... I STILL OWE HIM SOME PAYBACK ...
...FOR STEALING MY PREY FROM ME.....!
THE SPIRIT CHANNEL... WE'RE STILL CON-NECTED.
!
BESIDES ...HOW'D YOU EVEN FIND ME HERE .....?

MY OPPONENT IS A CORPSE PRINCESS, BUT SHE'S WOUNDED..... SO WHILE THE SEALED MANDALA IS STILL OPEN, PERHAPS I CAN...
TMP
NOW..... WHAT DO I DO...?
.....
WOBBLE
ZOOM
TOO SLOW.
!!
BANG
...WHA-
UH... AH...
GAH.

NO. THAT ATTACK JUST NOW...
...WAS PAYMENT FOR KEISEI'S SHOULDER AND ARM.....
GAH ...
SKID
... KUH.
THERE'S STILL TOO MUCH I'VE GOT TO ASK ABOUT.
I WON'T KILL YOU.


OF COURSE I COULDN'T MEASURE UP TO A CORPSE PRINCESS IN A ONE-ON-ONE WITHOUT ADEQUATE PREPARATIONS.....
I WAS NAIVE .....
I..... APPRECIATE IT...

SIT UP
... OH, COME ON!!
YOU'RE SO USELESS, IAN!!
I TOLD YOU TO KEEP HER AWAY FROM ME!
FSSHH
!?
WHOA !!
SMASH

TOO WEAK.
IF YOU WANNA BEAT ME...
...YOU GOTTA BE FASTER AND STRONGER.
LICK
PTOO
SLAM
YES... BUT HOW DO WE...?
OVER THAT QUICKLY?
HEY, AKA-SHA.
MY PUPPET WAS NO MATCH FOR HER. LET'S SCRAM.
JUST GIVE ME FIVE OF YOURS.
!
STAB
!
SO BE IT.....
TOUCH
...
THREE. ANY MORE WOULD BE WASTE-FUL.
TCH
SO STINGY.

LIFT
TMP
!
MA-KINA!
GOT IT.
RIGHT!
STEP
SAKI !!
!!
BANG
WAHH !!
!!
BLAM
STOMP
TURN
... WHA-

I APOLOGIZE ...
SWIRL
SO DULL, YOUR SO-CALLED "ESOTERIC" TEACHINGS.
THEY'RE WEAK BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT MADE FROM HUMANS, BUT THEY SHOULD BUY US THE TIME WE NEED.
BECAUSE THESE WERE ORIGINALLY SHIKABANE.
STAND
HAA.
OF COURSE, THIS IS ALL YOUR GREAT TECHNIQUE COULD PRODUCE.

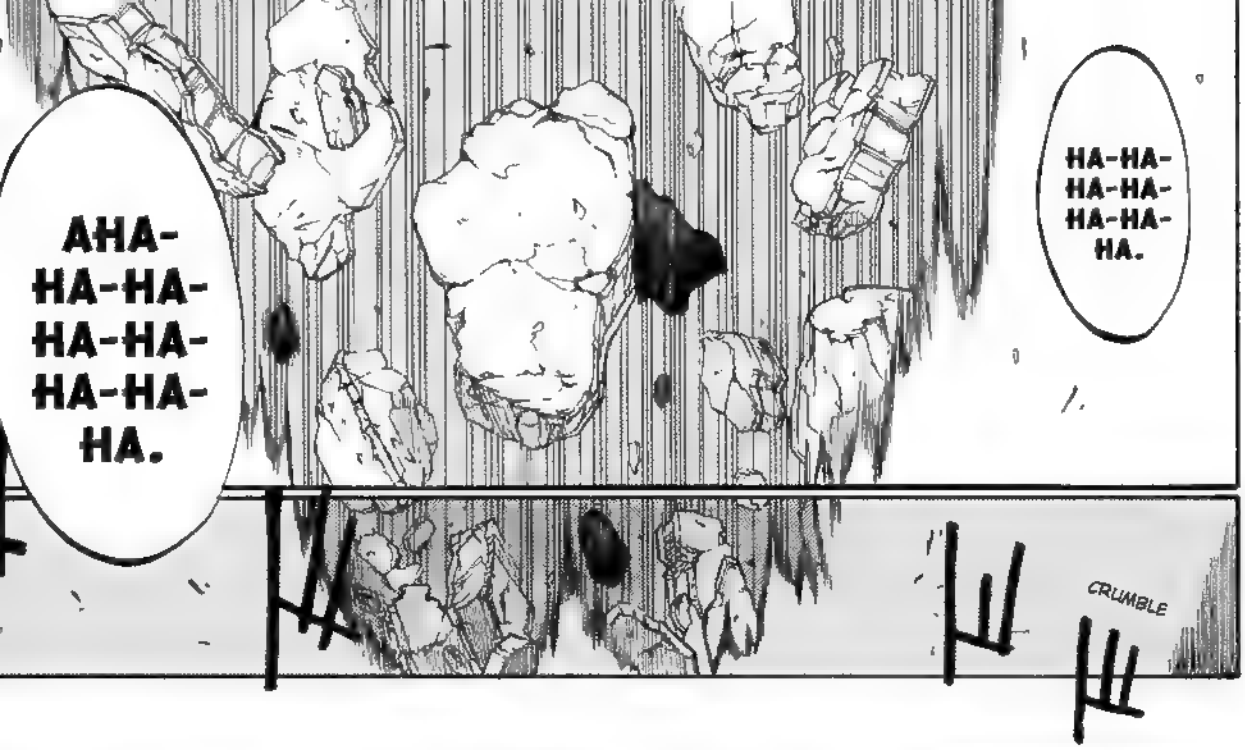
WHO... ARE YOU?
I DON'T..... KNOW THIS TECHNIQUE ...
WHO .....
HE'S TURNED THE REGRETS OF THE DEAD INTO CORPOREAL FORMS.....

PLINK
I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN.
YOUNG MISS.
"PUPPET MASTER" ROGERE GUSTAV.
I AM A VOODOO "BOKOR."

SLAM
CRACK
CRACK
BABOOM
SKID
INCH
TRUDGE
SHIT .....
THEY'RE GETTING AWAY...!!
...A BOMB .....!?
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK

CRACK
CRACK
DO NOT WORRY.
WE'LL MEET AGAIN, AND I'LL COME BEARING GIFTS, BROTHER.
RUMBLE
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
CRACK
FOR MY SCREEN-ING PROCESS IS ALREADY OVER.
AND WE WILL SOON BE COM-PLETE ...
...AND READY TO CURSE THE WORLD.
THE DEAD WILL REMAIN ON THIS EARTH AS THE LIVING CONTINUE TO PROPAGATE.
IT WILL BE A WORLD WITHOUT TRUE DEATH.

RUMBLE
WE WILL SMASH THE CYCLE OF REINCARNATION, LEAVING THE DEAD...
...TO PURSUE THEIR DESIRES WITHOUT LIMIT.
WE ARE THE "UNCLEAN BUNCH."
BROTHER.
I SIMPLY WISH TO LEARN...
...HOW WILL PEOPLE LIVE IN A WORLD WITHOUT DEATH .....
... ABSURD... YOU WANT TO BURY THIS WORLD IN DEATH ...?
YOU .....
YOU'RE TRYING TO CREATE A "LAND OF THE DEAD"...!
WILL THEY BREAK? OR ENDURE ...?
OR WILL THEY ALL END UP LIKE ME .....?
CRUMBLE
KU KU ...


AHA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA.
HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA.
CRUMBLE

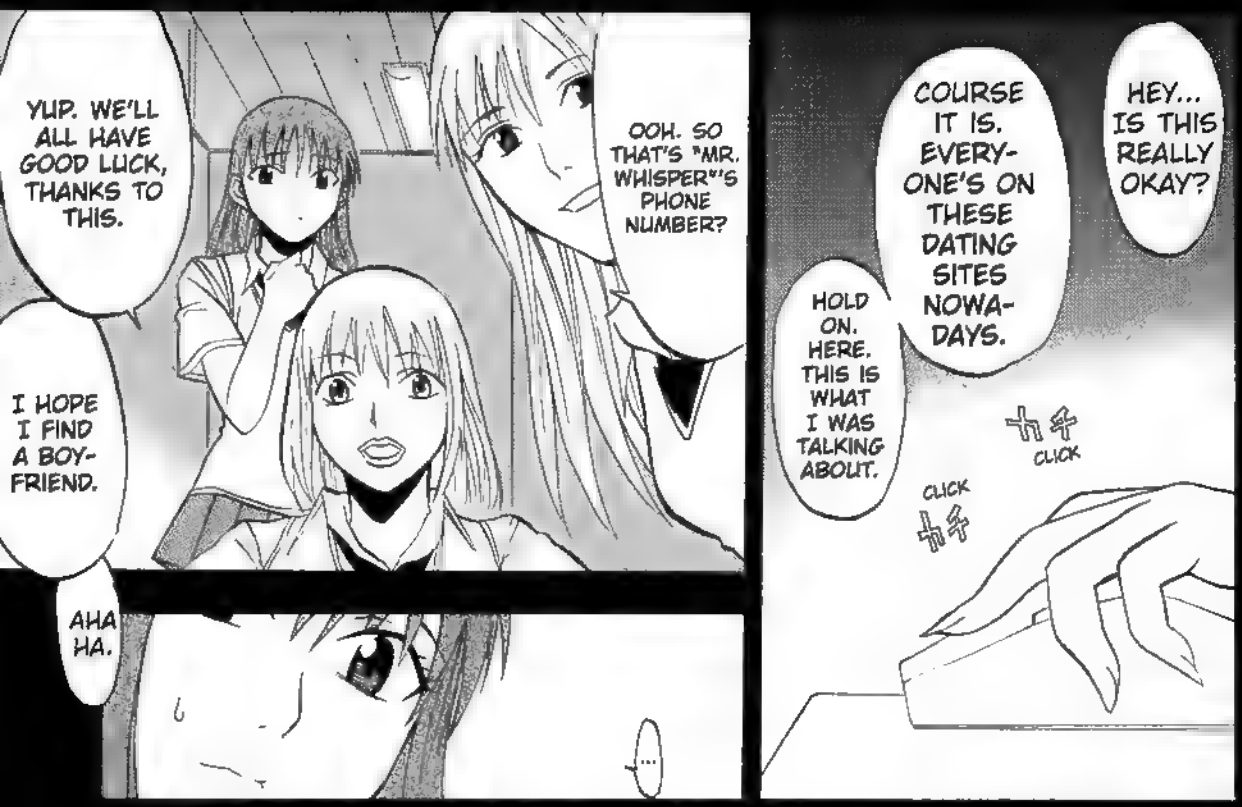
HE EVEN WON OVER AN ALLY WHO CAN PERFORM FEATS LIKE THIS...
THIS IS CHEMI-CALLY-INFUSED RED CLAY PASSED OFF AS FLESH.
WE MAY NOT KNOW HOW OR WHY HE'S DOING THIS, BUT AT LEAST WE CAN TELL THAT HE'S SERIOUS.
.....
FSSHH

.....
CRUSH
UNFOR-TUNATE. FOR SURE.
I'M SORRY, RIKA AND SAKI.
I MADE YOU COMMIT THAT HERETICAL "BOND-BREAKING," AND I STILL COULDN'T CAPTURE THEM.....
OWWW...
AH, IT'S FINE.
THAT STRATEGY WAS OUR IDEA IN THE FIRST PLACE.
THOUGH IT IS UNFOR-TUNATE THAT THEY ESCAPED .....

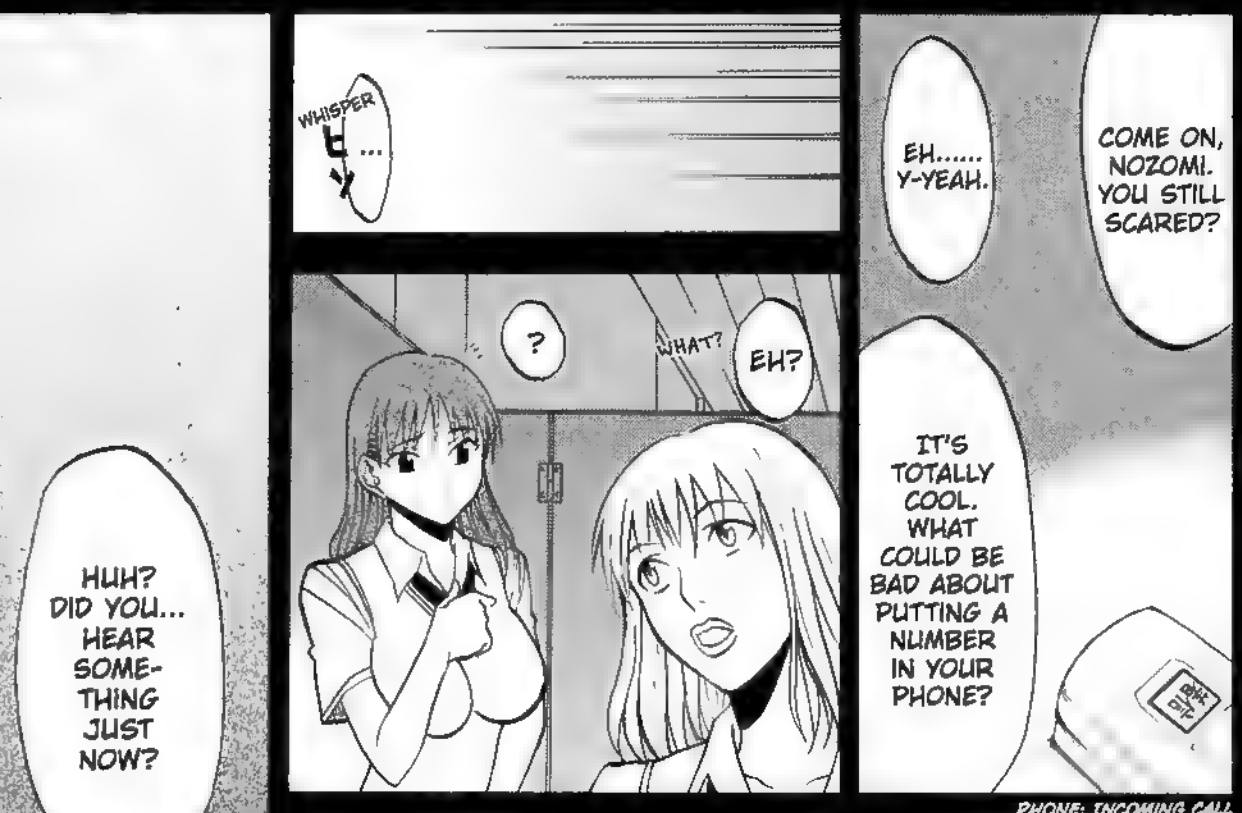
...IN THAT CASE ...
... WHAT'S NEXT, KEISE!?
WELL, THE SAME TRICK WON'T WORK TWICE.
THEY'RE SURE TO BE ON GUARD FROM NOW ON...
RUB

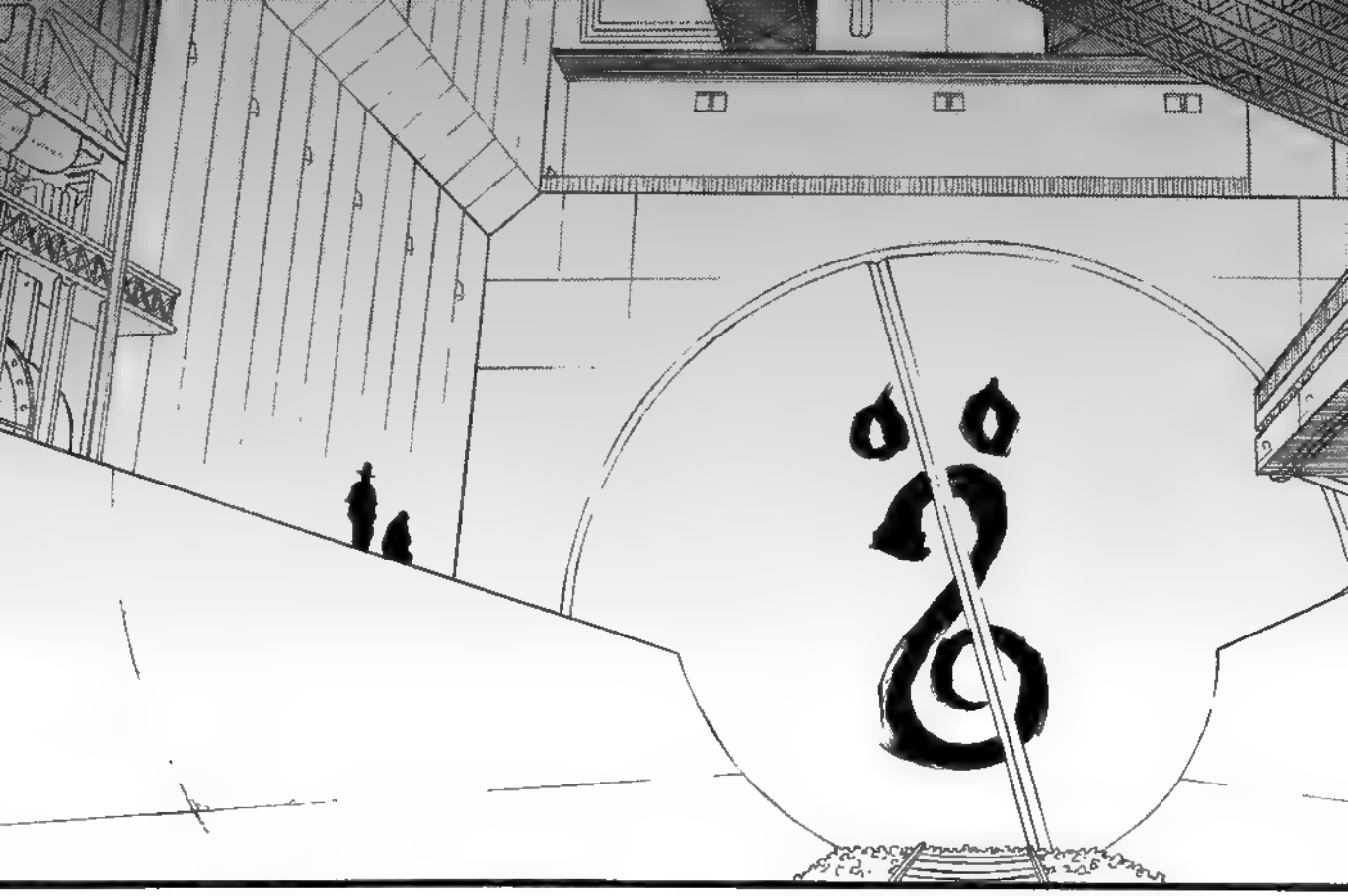
I'M STUMPED.
BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO STOCK UP ON TECHNIQUES AND EQUIPMENT .....
... AHHH ...
HAA.
...

...THEN WE'VE GOTTA HEAD BACK.....
...TO THE HEAD TEMPLE.


YUP. WE'LL ALL HAVE GOOD LUCK, THANKS TO THIS.
I HOPE I FIND A BOY-FRIEND.
AHA HA.
OOH. SO THAT'S "MR. WHISPER"'S PHONE NUMBER?
...
HEY... IS THIS REALLY OKAY?
COURSE IT IS. EVERY-ONE'S ON THESE DATING SITES NOWA-DAYS.
HOLD ON. HERE. THIS IS WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT.
カチ CLICK
CLICK カチ

# DEATH 7: WHISPERING DEATH GOD (PART I)


HUH? DID YOU... HEAR SOME-THING JUST NOW?
WHISPER ...
? WHAT? EH?
EH..... Y-YEAH.
COME ON, NOZOMI. YOU STILL SCARED?
IT'S TOTALLY COOL. WHAT COULD BE BAD ABOUT PUTTING A NUMBER IN YOUR PHONE?
PHONE: INCOMING CALL



GOOD HEAVENS... IT'S BEEN NOTHING BUT LOSSES SINCE I JOINED YOU.
I HAD GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO IAN.
WAS IT NECESSARY TO BE SO STUBBORN EVEN AFTER BEING SHOT IN THE LEG?
.....
HA-HA.
I SUP-POSE IT WAS.

OHH .....
THAT'S QUITE A HEAVY WOUND FOR A HUMAN.
PITY.
THAT YOU SURVIVED, AKASHA.

I SEE.
NOT ONLY DID YOU FAIL TO RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS, BUT YOU WILLINGLY GAVE THE ENEMY INTEL...
NO WONDER POOR ROGERE HERE IS UPSET.
...HA HA.
TRUE ENOUGH, LI HONG-SAN.

I CAN'T HELP ...
...BUT BE REMINDED OF MY OLD SELF.....

WELL, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY...IT WAS ON IMPULSE.
HE'S JUST SO PITIFUL THOUGH.
AND WHEN I SEE SUCH A SENTI-MENTAL FOOL...

IN THE MEAN-TIME...
...THOSE WITHIN WHO CAN'T BE RESTRAINED WILL CONTINUE WITH THE PLAN.
RUMBLE
ALAS.....I'LL BE OUT OF COMMISSION FOR THE TIME BEING.

...

...I'VE NEARLY FORGOTTEN WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO KILL, IT'S BEEN SO LONG.
LATELY ...
LICK

EHHHH.
TCH!
YOUR CURSE IS RARE, EVEN AMONGST CURSED SHIKABANE. WE'D BE IN TROUBLE IF OUR GATEKEEPER WERE TO SLIP AWAY.
NO. NOT YOU.
BOOOO.

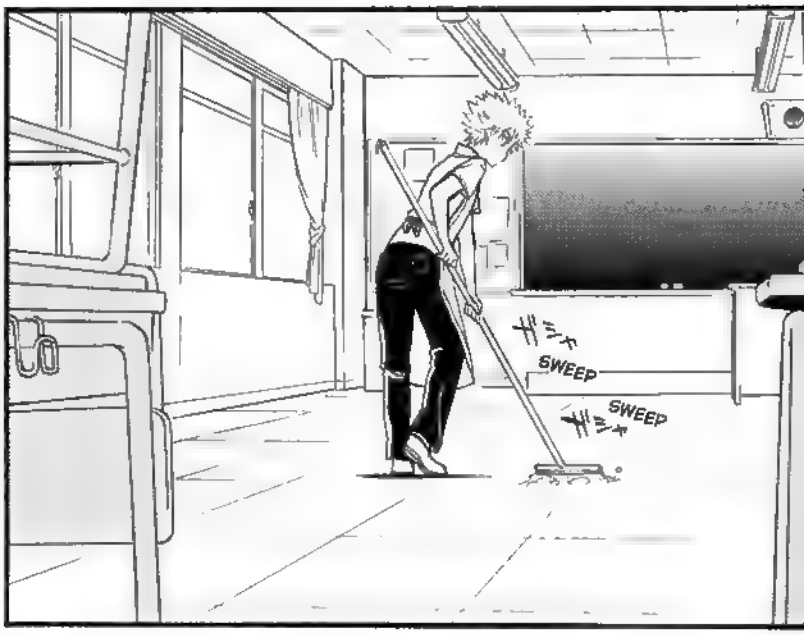
OHH!!
JANGLE
DOES THAT MEAN I GET TO HEAD OUTSIDE SOON?

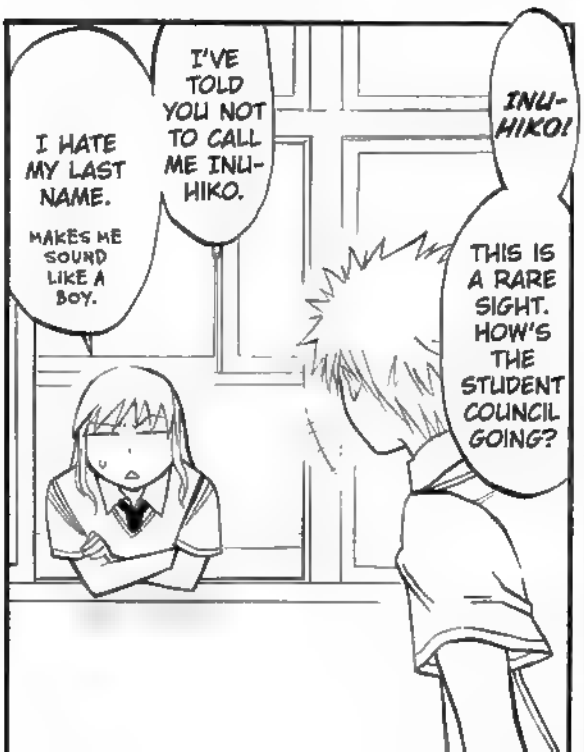
CLANG
CLANG
CLANG
WELL, WHAT-EVER. I CAN WAIT.
THUD
THUD
THUD
AT LEAST UNTIL WE'VE PREPARED FOR THE BIG FESTIVAL.

AND OF COURSE ...
I WON'T TELL THE SCARY, SCAAARY KING ABOUT IT.
LEER
SO I'LL OVERLOOK YOU AND YOUR SELF-ISHNESS FOR NOW.
BUT WHEN PROMOTING A FESTIVAL, IT'S SMART TO LET THE CUSTOMERS KNOW A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE AGENDA.
SO BRING ME SOME-THING NICE!!
...
I'LL SPECIAL-ORDER A PRETTY SILVER RING, JUST FOR YOU.
YAAY ♪
STEP
GUESS I'LL HEAD BACK THEN.
BACK WHERE WE'RE MEANT TO BE.
IN "NARAKU."
CLANG

SHUT UP
ON-DUTY TODAY IS:
OURI

OURI.

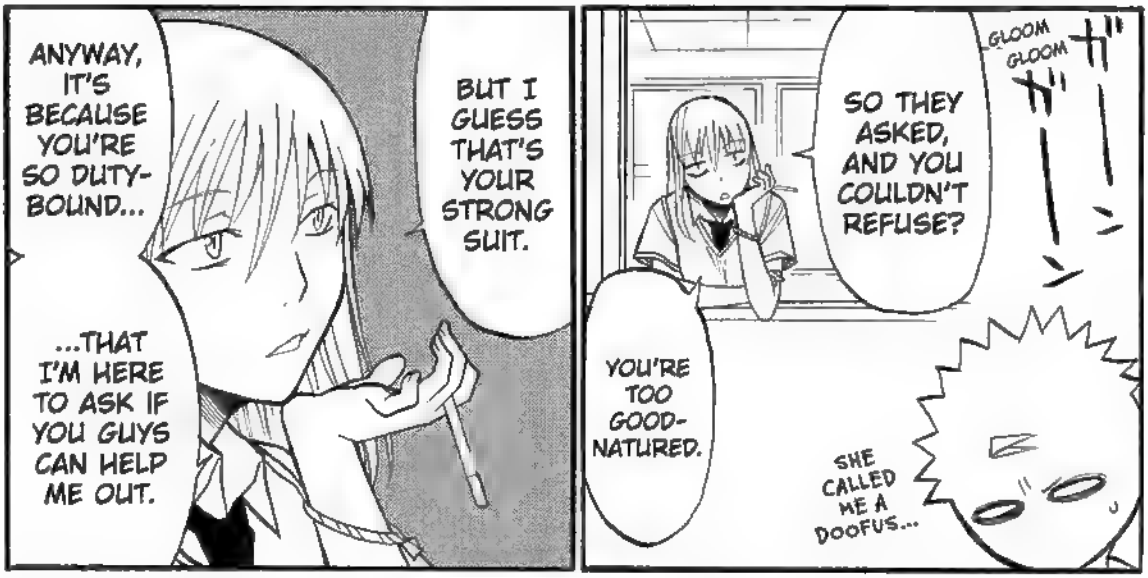

SWEEP
SWEEP


I HATE MY LAST NAME.
MAKES ME SOUND LIKE A BOY.
I'VE TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME INU-HIKO.
INU-HIKO!
THIS IS A RARE SIGHT. HOW'S THE STUDENT COUNCIL GOING?

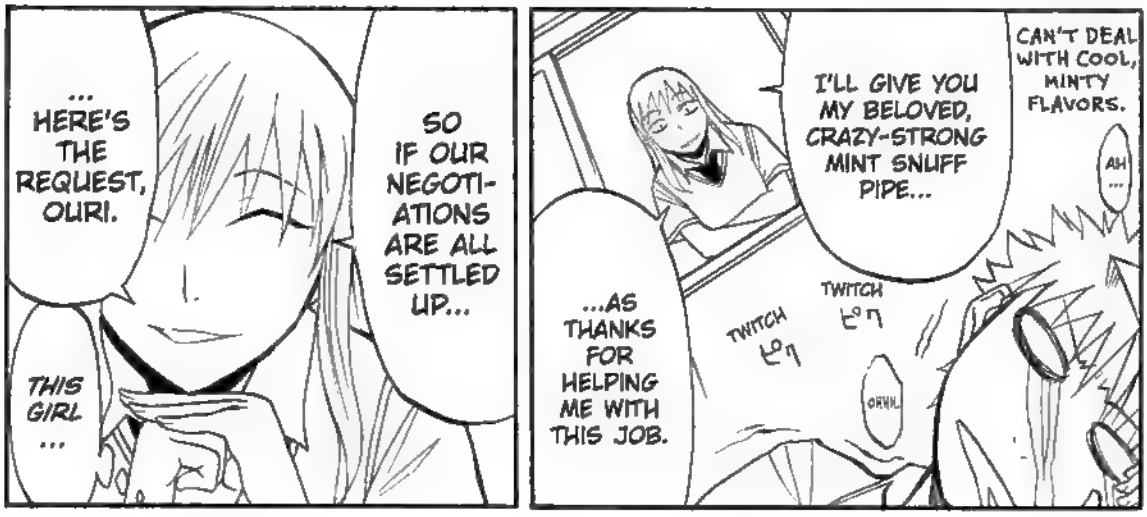
YO.

I ACTUALLY CAME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT...
HUH? YOU LOSE ANOTHER GAME OF ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS AND GET CLASS-ROOM DUTY?
AND STUDENT COUNCIL'S ALRIGHT, I GUESS.
N-NOPE. IT WASN'T ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS TODAY!!
IT WAS A LADDER LOTTERY !!
POP
BAM
WELL OF COURSE YOU'D LOSE THAT TOO, YOU LUCKLESS DOOFUS.
IDIOT !!

SHIRT: ON-DUTY


ANYWAY, IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE SO DUTY-BOUND...
...THAT I'M HERE TO ASK IF YOU GUYS CAN HELP ME OUT.
BUT I GUESS THAT'S YOUR STRONG SUIT.
SO THEY ASKED, AND YOU COULDN'T REFUSE?
YOU'RE TOO GOOD-NATURED.
GLOOM GLOOM
SHE CALLED ME A DOOFUS...

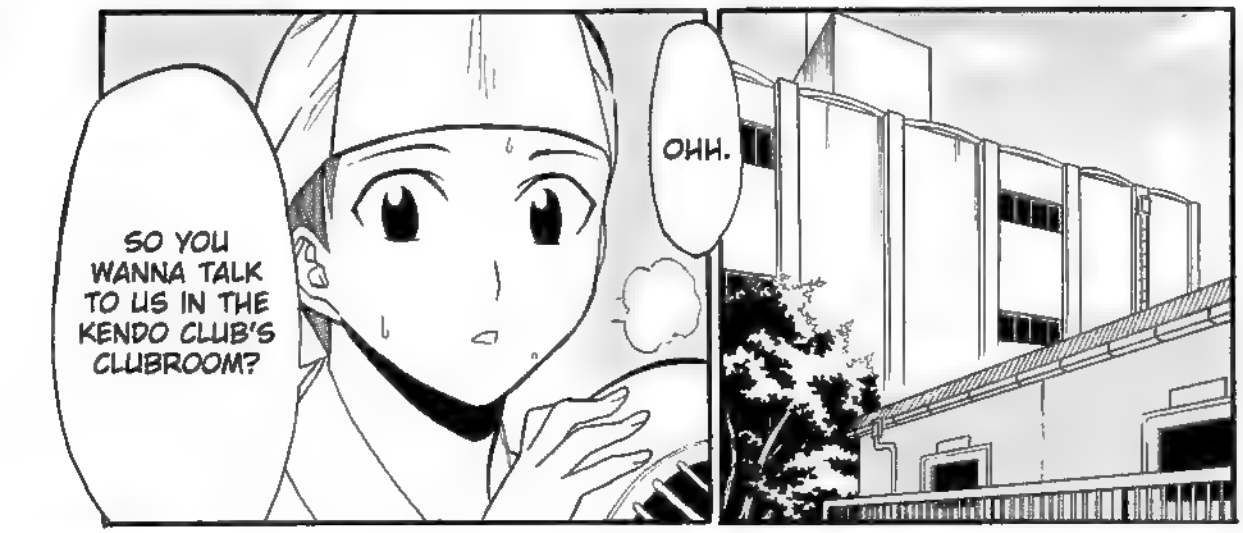
.....
IT'S NEVER ANYTHING LIKE SIMPLE CLASS-ROOM DUTY!!
SINCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, NOTHING GOOD'S EVER COME OF YOUR REQUESTS, INUHIKO!!
I REFUSE !!
GRRR

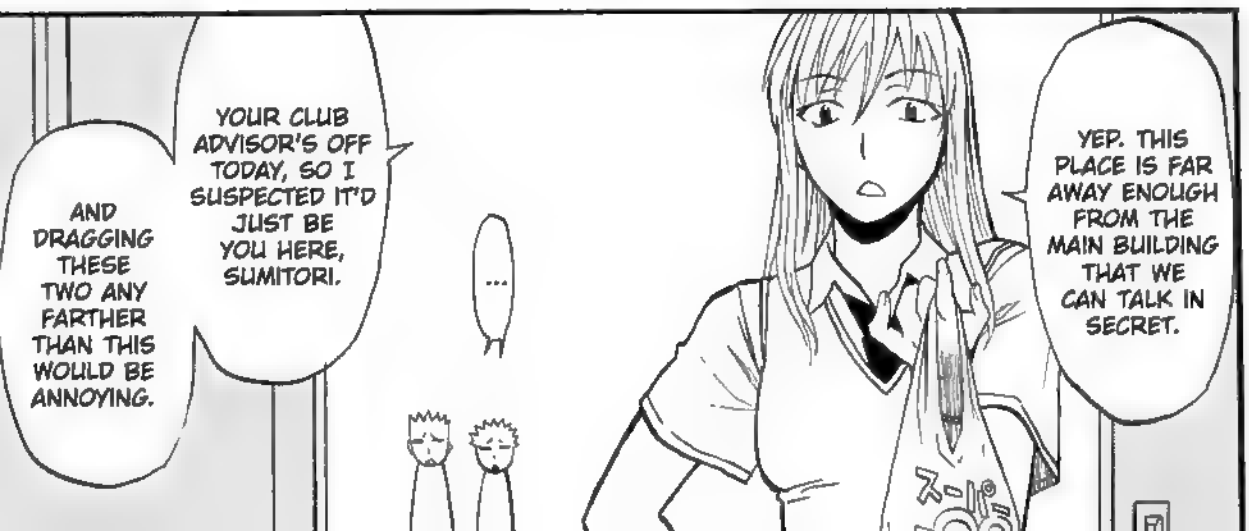

...HERE'S THE REQUEST, OURI.
SO IF OUR NEGOTI-ATIONS ARE ALL SETTLED UP...
THIS GIRL ...
I'LL GIVE YOU MY BELOVED, CRAZY-STRONG MINT SNUFF PIPE...
CAN'T DEAL WITH COOL, MINTY FLAVORS.
AH ...
...AS THANKS FOR HELPING ME WITH THIS JOB.
TWITCH
TWITCH
ORHH.

OH, MY BELOVED (KASUGA-SAN)
SWEET AND BITTER (CHOCOLATE)
IN A VAST SEA OF MELTED CHOCOLATE
MY BODY, LIKE A WAX-COVERED PERFORMER
AND MY HEART
OH, BUT THE HEART'S NOT A THING FOR THINKING;
IT'S A SOUL, FOR FEELING)
OHH, MY SWEET, SWEET COCOA BEAN...
SONG OF LOVE AND THE SEA
LYRICS BY HIROSHIGE USHIJIMA
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
SCRITCH
図書室

SIGN: LIBRARY

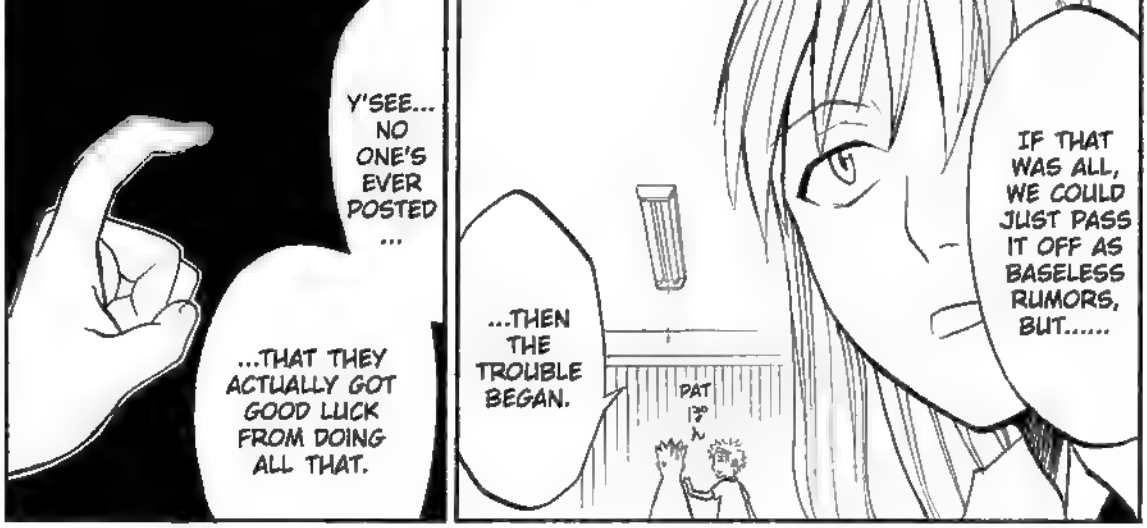
OF COURSE OUR LITTLE POETICAL PUNK WOULD SHOUT QUIETLY WHILE IN THE LIBRARY.
SNATCH
WHAAA !!
WHAT THE HELL!!?
LOOM
にゅう
OH-HO.
WHAT A WONDERFULLY DELUDED COMPOSITION.
I WAS JUST STUDYING VOCAB FOR MIDTERMS .....
ENOUGH ALREADY.
USHIJIMA. WE'VE GOTTA TALK, SO COME WITH.

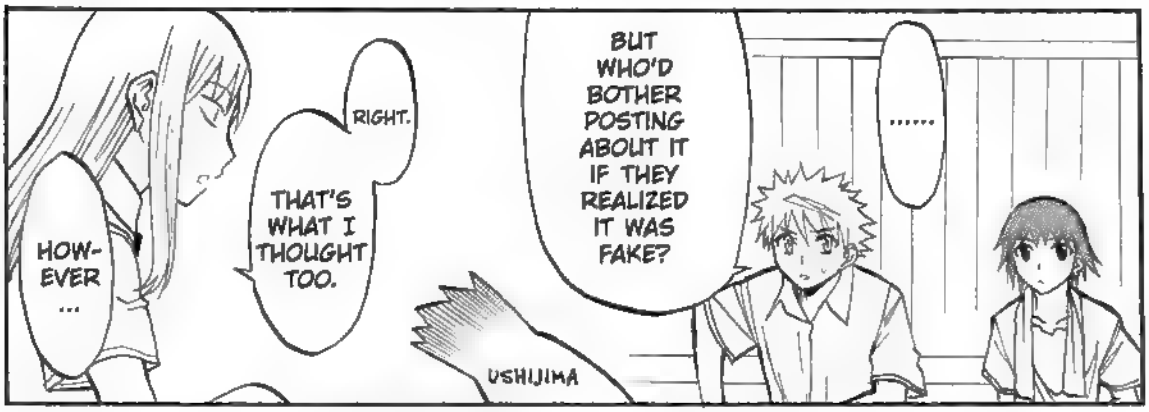

SO YOU WANNA TALK TO US IN THE KENDO CLUB'S CLUBROOM?
OHH.


AND DRAGGING THESE TWO ANY FARTHER THAN THIS WOULD BE ANNOYING.
YOUR CLUB ADVISOR'S OFF TODAY, SO I SUSPECTED IT'D JUST BE YOU HERE, SUMITORI.
...
YEP. THIS PLACE IS FAR AWAY ENOUGH FROM THE MAIN BUILDING THAT WE CAN TALK IN SECRET.

IT'S SUPPOSEDLY "MR. WHISPER"'S PHONE NUMBER, AND IT'LL BRING GOOD LUCK.
YOU WRITE A CERTAIN MESSAGE IN A CERTAIN WAY ON THIS MESSAGE BOARD, AND YOU GET A REPLY WITH A PHONE NUMBER.
ORIGINALLY... IT STARTED OUT AS AN URBAN LEGEND ON THIS ONE DATING SITE...

PHONE: INCOMING CALL

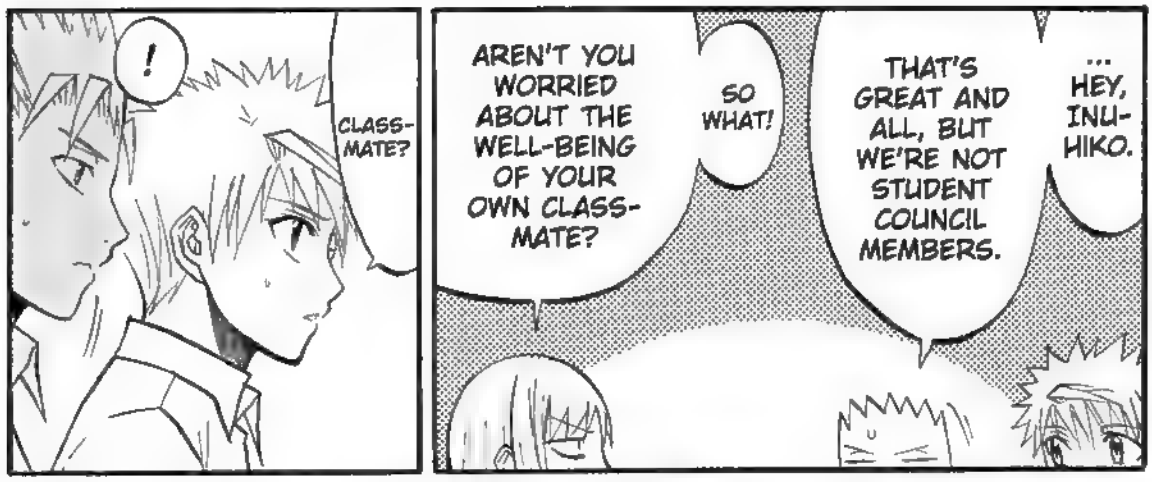

Y'SEE... NO ONE'S EVER POSTED ...
...THAT THEY ACTUALLY GOT GOOD LUCK FROM DOING ALL THAT.
...THEN THE TROUBLE BEGAN.
PAT
IF THAT WAS ALL, WE COULD JUST PASS IT OFF AS BASELESS RUMORS, BUT.....

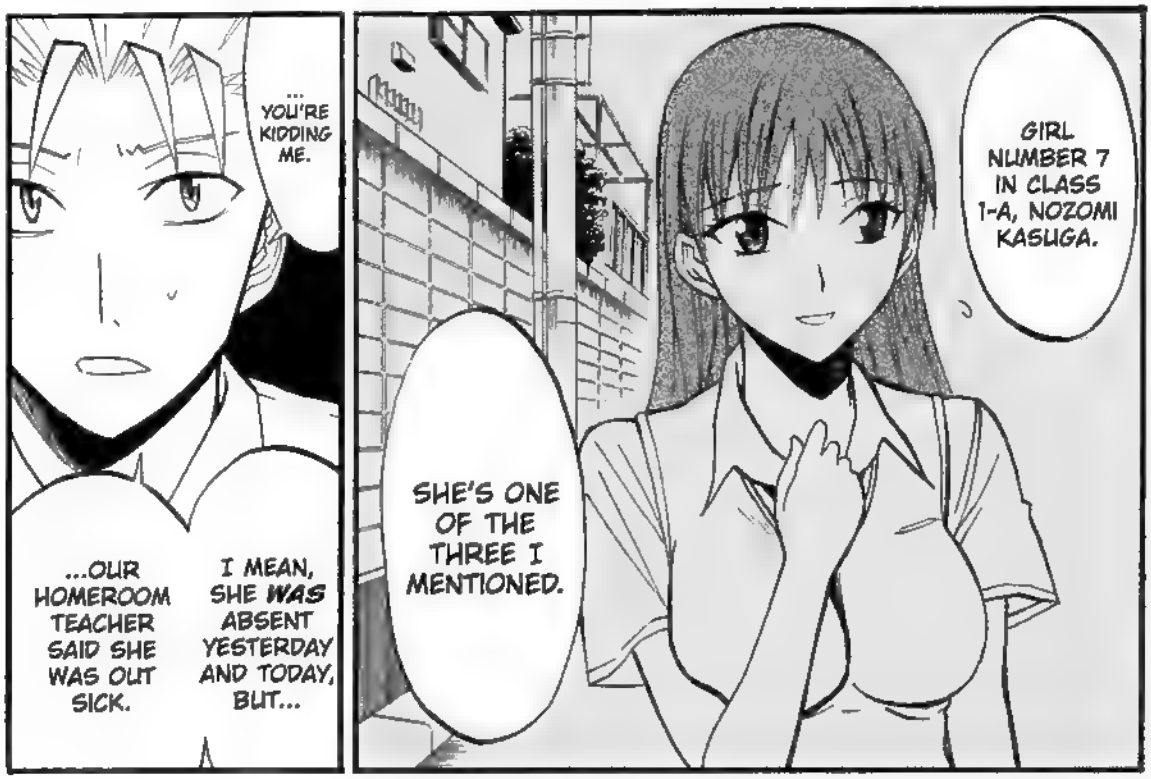

HOW-EVER ...
RIGHT.
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT TOO.
BUT WHO'D BOTHER POSTING ABOUT IT IF THEY REALIZED IT WAS FAKE?
.....
USHIJIMA

.....
GULP
...WOUND UP GOING MISSING.
A LOT OF THEM, ACTUALLY.
I DID SOME RESEARCH. TURNS OUT THAT SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO GOT MR. WHISPER'S NUMBER...

...IS 'COS THERE'RE THREE GIRLS IN OUR GRADE WHO FELL FOR THE WHOLE MR. WHISPER THING.
...THE REASON I'VE GATHERED YOU HERE INSTEAD OF LEAVING IT TO THE POLICE...
NOT SURE IF IT'S RELATED OR JUST A COIN-CIDENCE, BUT...

...THEN I'M NOT MIZUKI INUHIKO, FIRST-YEAR REP ON THE IKAI HIGH STUDENT COUNCIL!
ぐぬぬ
GRRR.
AND IF I SIT BACK AND LET SOME-THING BAD HAPPEN ...


!
CLASS-MATE?
AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT THE WELL-BEING OF YOUR OWN CLASS-MATE?
SO WHAT!
THAT'S GREAT AND ALL, BUT WE'RE NOT STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS.
... HEY, INU-HIKO.


... YOU'RE KIDDING ME.
...OUR HOMEROOM TEACHER SAID SHE WAS OUT SICK.
I MEAN, SHE WAS ABSENT YESTERDAY AND TODAY, BUT...
SHE'S ONE OF THE THREE I MENTIONED.
GIRL NUMBER 7 IN CLASS 1-A, NOZOMI KASUGA.

I BET HER FAMILY DIDN'T WANT PEOPLE THINKING SHE'S RUN AWAY.
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THE POLICE GOT A MISSING PERSONS NOTICE ABOUT HER...
AND I BET SHE'S GOT MR. WHISPER'S NUMBER.
SOMEONE SAID THEY SAW HER HEAD INTO A NET CAFÉ WITH THE OTHER TWO.
THAT'S WHY...
SLAM

SHAKE
SHAKE
HAA.
HAA.
HAA ...
HAA ...
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHOCK
RING! RING !!

BEEP
...H-
...
HELLO
...?
.....
SHAKE
SHAKE
HEY
...
HEY
...
I'M ON THE ROOF, JUST LIKE YOU SAID... TH-THAT'S ENOUGH, RIGHT...!?
I-I..... DON'T... WANNA DO THIS ANY-MORE...!!
MR. WHIS-PER.
EH?
SO PLEASE ...!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT GETTING GOOD LUCK ANYMORE .....!
MP.
...!

JUMP.
...HIC...
DRIP
UHH...
UH... UHHH...
CLANG
UWAHHH.....

...UHH.
AHH...
JUMP.....
JUMP...
WHISPER
JUMP...JUMP.
JUMP...
JUMP.
WHISPER!
スゥ..
BREATHE
...HIC.
JUMP!
CLANG
...UWAH.
N-NO...

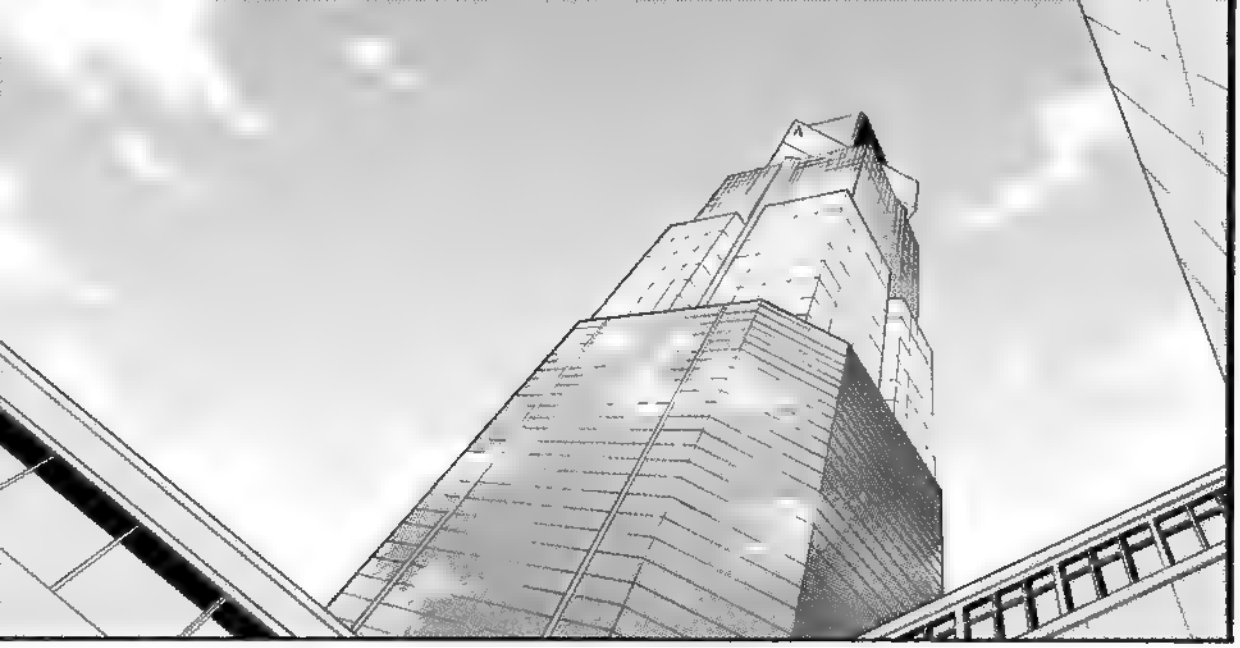
AHHH...
RATTLE
NOO...
AH...
RATTLE
AHHHHHHH.
IWAI
RATTLE
RATTLE

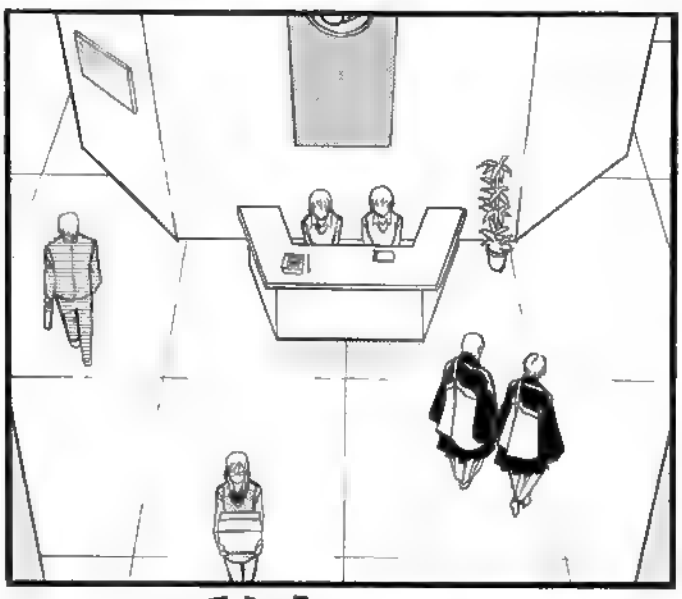
RIGHT NOW...
...I'VE GOT CLASSMATES OF THE OTHER TWO LOOKING FOR THEM.
BUT I'D LIKE YOU THREE TO HELP ME SEARCH FOR CLASS A'S NOZOMI KASUGA.
.....

HMPH.
LEAVE IT TO ME, INUHIKO. I'LL BE SURE TO SAVE THAT GAL FROM THIS ROTTEN TOWN!
INU-HIKO.
AFTER-WARDS OUR SOULS'LL BE BOUND IN EVERLASTING LOVE. HOW GREAT.
DID YOU ASK USHIJIMA TO COME ALONG 'COS YOU KNEW HE'D ACT LIKE THIS...?
OH YEAH.
WHAT'S WITH THOSE FAKE SCARS ON HIS TORSO?

SO ARE YOU IN OR NOT!?
BUT I REALLY DO WANT YOUR HELP. THE MORE, THE MERRIER IN A MANHUNT.
RUSTLE
MM.
I'VE COME PREPARED.
HOW'RE WE GONNA SEARCH ?
SURE THING.
...NO CHOICE, I GUESS.
SO...
...LET'S REGISTER MR. WHISPER'S NUMBER OURSELVES. THEN HE'LL COME AFTER US BEFORE GOING FOR THE OTHER THREE.
CLICK
IF THIS MR. WHISPER THING IS A TRAP BY SOME CRIMINAL ...
...THEN HE'S USING CELL PHONE NUMBERS TO IDENTIFY HIS VICTIMS.
...A LAP-TOP?
YEP.

SO CATCHING MR. WHISPER IS THE QUICKEST WAY TO WRAP EVERYTHING UP.
EVEN IF WE DID FIND NOZOMI KASUGA, IF THE BAD GUY'S STILL OUT THERE, THEN THE OTHER TWO'RE IN TROUBLE.
HOLD ON!!
SO THAT "MANHUNT" YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT...WE'RE NOT LOOKING FOR THE THREE GIRLS—WE'RE GOING AFTER MR. WHISPER HIMSELF!?
OF COURSE!! OFFENSE IS THE BEST DEFENSE!
JOLT
...I GET IT.
SO NOW WE JUST NEED SOMEONE TO BE BAIT.
ALL FOUR OF US DOING IT TOGETHER WOULD LOOK SUSPICIOUS. MUCH BETTER TO DRAW HIM OUT WITH JUST ONE OF US...
HUH !?





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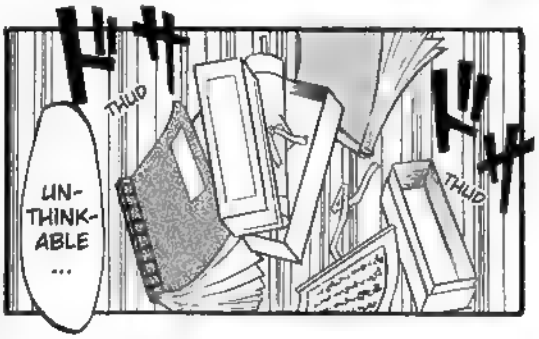
THERE WAS NO CHOICE. I HAD TO FIGHT.
...NO HELPING IT, OLD MAN.
A CONTRACTING MONK CAN'T VERY WELL BE INJURED. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR TWO LIVES?



WELL.
YOU'RE SAFE, SO THAT'S THAT, BUT...
...IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO TREAT THE ARCHIVES LIKE THAT?
WHO'S GOING TO CLEAN THIS UP?
I'M HAVING A HARD TIME RESEARCHING WITHOUT MY RIGHT ARM, HERE.
MY SHOULDER'S TOO MESSED UP TO USE.

UMM..... BROTHER.
I'M GOING TO CHECK ON HOSHIMURA-SAN.
COULD YOU MIND SAKI FOR ME?
RIGHT. THANKS, RIKA.
SHE'S TENDING TO YOUR CORPSE PRINCESS'S RECOVERY?
YEAH.
I'VE BEEN OVERWORKING HER LATELY, SO AN EXAM AND TREATMENT FROM A MEMBER OF THE MEDICALLY-INCLINED ARAGAMI FAMILY IS JUST WHAT SHE NEEDS.

INDEED ...
FROM WHAT LITTLE YOU'VE TOLD ME, IT'S CLEAR THIS IS AN EMERGENCY OF THE FIRST ORDER.
NOT ONLY DO WE HAVE A TRAITOROUS MONK WITH A SUTRA...
...BUT ALSO A VOODOO PRIEST. FORMING THIS "UNCLEAN BUNCH" .....

AND... IN THE MEANTIME...
...I THOUGHT I COULD GATHER RESOURCES AND LOOK FOR A WAY TO FIGHT *THEM*.

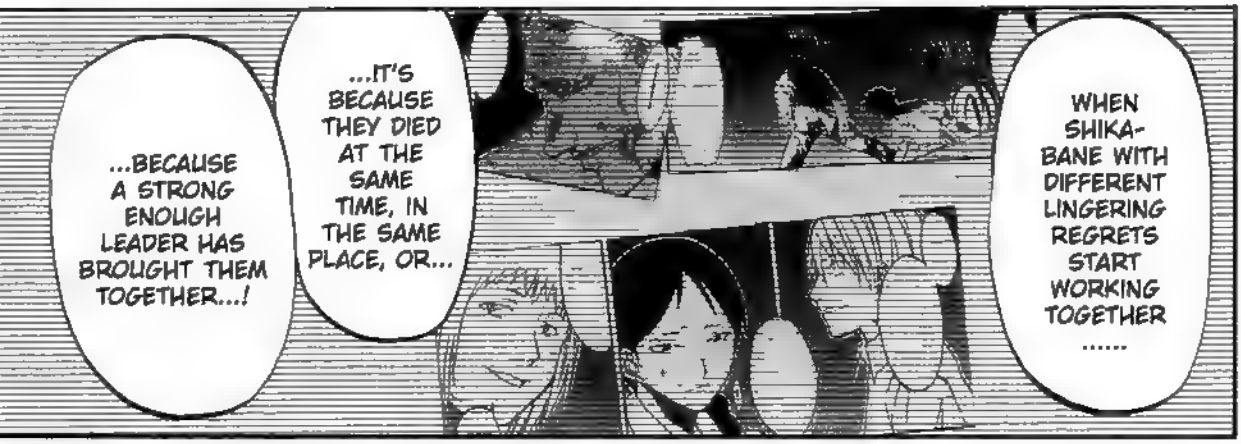
EXPLAIN IT TO ME, TAKAMINE.
HOW'RE THOSE UNCLEAN GUYS CONNECTED TO US.....? .....THOSE KINDSA THINGS.
AND WHAT'S VOODOO .....?
偉そーに HAUGHTY
CRUNCH
LIKE WHY'S THAT LONER MONK SUCH A PROBLEM ANYWAY .....?
...THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I EVEN LEFT THE ARAGAMI HOUSE, SO I DON'T REALLY GET WHAT'S GOING ON.
RUSTLE
THAT'S GREAT AND ALL, BUT...
ポテチ
BAG: CONSOMMÉ FLAVOR POTATO CHIPS
FROM WHERE DID YOU OBTAIN SO MANY SNACK FOODS?
EH? FU-FU-FU. IT'S A SECRET. ♪
RIKA DOESN'T LET ME EAT THIS MUCH WHEN SHE'S AROUND.
SAYS IT RUINS MY APPETITE.
SOME-THING'S BEEN BOTHERING ME...
BUT FIRST ...
VERY WELL ...
NO ONE NEEDS THAT MANY SNACKS TO LIVE!! THAT'S TOO MANY SWEETS!!
...
OLD MAN.
WHAM
AH, BUT CORPSE PRINCESSES ARE A DIFFERENT STORY.
BAM
BAM
NO THEY'RE NOT!!
RIGHT .....
UNDER-STANDING THE SITUATION AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.
HERE, SAY "AHH," TAKAMINE... ♥
...NO THANK YOU!!
.....
YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT, KEISEI.

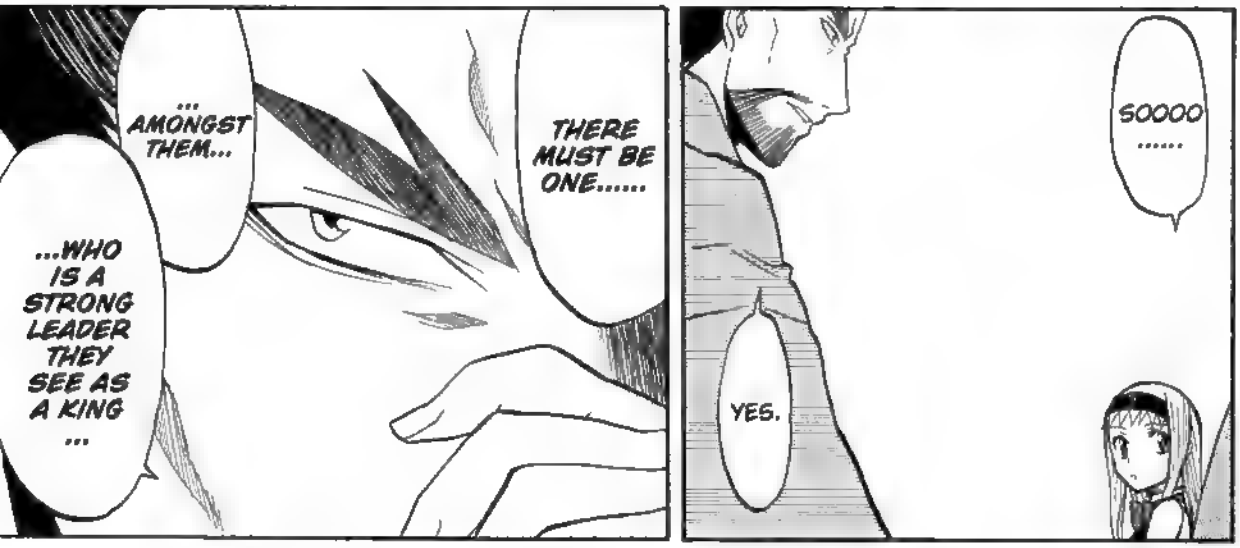
LET'S REVIEW, FIRST.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT VOODOO, KEISEI?
...? AH. UMM..... IT'S FAMOUS FOR CREATING ZOMBIES...
...AND IT'S A BLENDED RELIGION OBSERVED MAINLY IN HAITI... RIGHT?
I MADE HIM MAD... NOW MY SNACKS'RE ALL GONE...
PSSHH

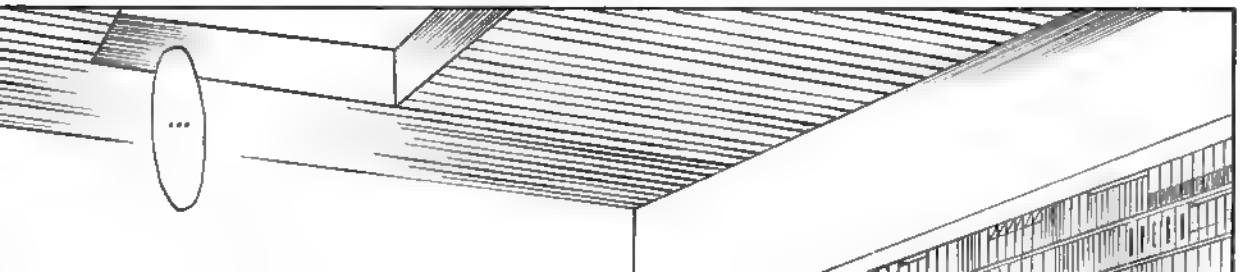
RIGHT.
BUT THERE'S MORE TO VOODOO THAN THE CREATION OF ZOMBIES.
VOODOO PRIESTS ARE KNOWN AS "HOUNGAN."
AND AS A RELIGION, VOODOO CONCERNS ITSELF WITH LEADING AND PROTECTING THOSE WHO SEEK SALVATION.

THESE SORCERERS ARE CALLED "BOKOR."
BUT RARELY, THERE APPEAR VILLAINS WHO USE VOODOO MAGIC FOR PERSONAL GAIN.
IF THIS MAN YOU ENCOUNTERED CALLED HIMSELF A BOKOR ...
...THEN HE MUST BE A HOUNGAN WHO FELL TO DARKNESS .....
KIND OF LIKE OUR VERY OWN TRAITOR MONK, HUH.
YES, I SUPPOSE.
CRUNCH
MORE SNACKS...

CALI-BER?
YES. SHIKABANE ARE FUNDA-MENTALLY LONERS.
THIS IS BECAUSE EACH HAS HIS OR HER OWN MOTIVATIONS.
THE ISSUE...IS NEITHER THE BOKOR'S ABILITIES NOR HIS POWER.
RATHER, IT'S THAT "UNCLEAN BUNCH" IS OF A CALIBER TO ATTRACT HUMAN FOLLOWERS.

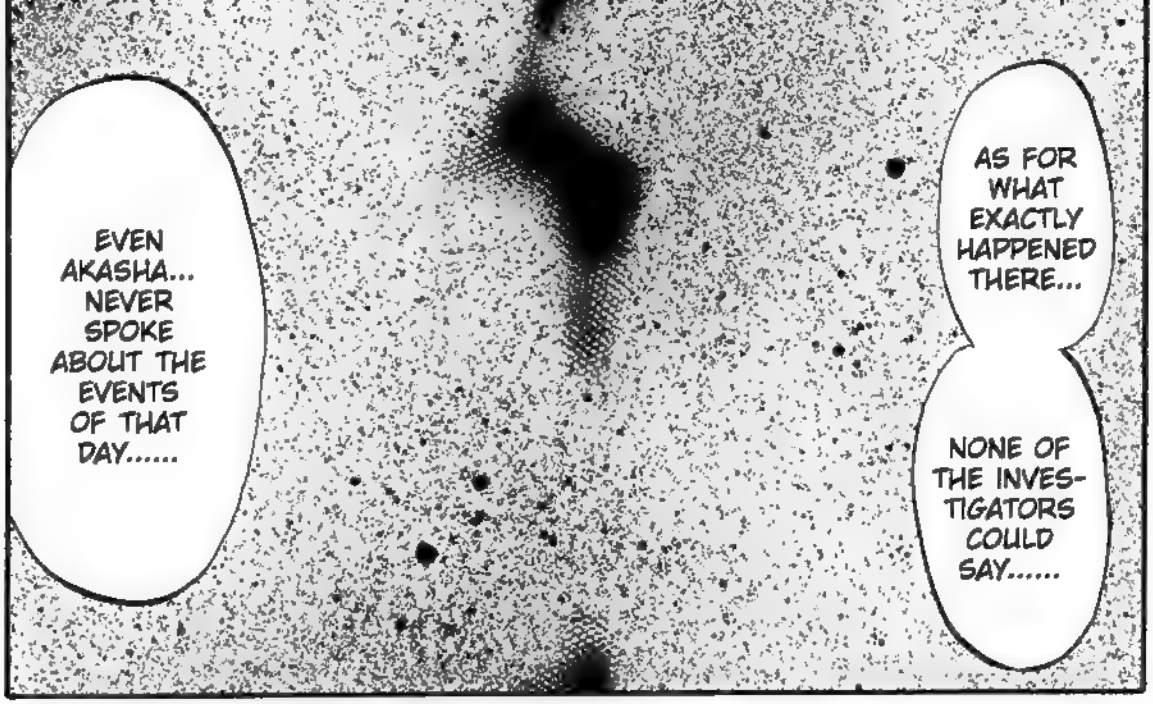

...BECAUSE A STRONG ENOUGH LEADER HAS BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER...!
...IT'S BECAUSE THEY DIED AT THE SAME TIME, IN THE SAME PLACE, OR...
WHEN SHIKA-BANE WITH DIFFERENT LINGERING REGRETS START WORKING TOGETHER .....


...WHO IS A STRONG LEADER THEY SEE AS A KING ...
...AMONGST THEM...
THERE MUST BE ONE.....
SOOOO .....
YES.


...

.....
THAT'S THE PROBLEM HERE.
THAT THEY'RE USING TECHNIQUES THAT SHIKABANE CAN'T PERFORM .....
IT'S A GROUP WITH GOALS UNLIKE ANY WE'VE SEEN BEFORE.
...THEN WHY'S HE NEED HUMAN FRIENDS? HUMANS'RE WAY WEAKER THAN EVEN THE WEAKEST SHIKABANE.
SLURP
SLURP
SLURP
SLURP
BUT ...
...IF THERE'S SOME REALLY STRONG SHIKABANE ...
SLURRRRP
STOP MAKING THOSE DISGUSTING VOICES!
BLUNT
YOU MEAN WHAT HE SAID?
SOME LAND OF THE DEAD?
PERHAPS.
WE CANNOT YET BE SURE.
.....
UNTIL FIVE YEARS AGO..... YES.
.....WHY'D THAT AKASHA GUY.....
SLURP
...BECOME A TRAITOR, ANYWAY?
WASN'T HE..... OUR FRIEND?
FIVE YEARS AGO ...
JUST LIKE NOW, A STRONG SHIKABANE APPEARED, LEADING A WHOLE "SWARM."
ON A SMALLER SCALE THOUGH...

A SUPPRESSION SQUAD WAS FORMED. IT WAS A THIRTY MEMBER UNIT THAT INCLUDED EIGHT CORPSE PRINCESSES AND AKASHA HIMSELF, WHO'D JUST BECOME HEAD GONSHOU-SOUJOU. THEY SET OUT TO EXTERMINATE THE THREAT.....
IT WAS A FIGHTING FORCE MORE THAN CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THE PERCEIVED SHIKABANE THREAT..... EVERYONE BELIEVED THE SQUAD HAD TRIUMPHED.....
BUT THEN ...
...WHEN THE CLEAN-UP CREW RECEIVED NOTICE AND APPEARED ON THE SCENE, WHAT THEY SAW.....
...WAS A DYING CORPSE PRINCESS WITH BLACK INSECTS STREAMING FROM HER WOUNDS.
THE MEMBERS OF THE SUPPRESSION SQUAD LAY DEAD WITH INJURIES THAT SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY THAT CORPSE PRINCESS'S WEAPONS .....
ALSO ...
THEY FOUND AKASHA. HE WAS HOLDING HIS OWN CORPSE PRINCESS, WHO'D BEEN TORN IN HALF. HIS EYES WERE LIKE THE DEEPEST PITS OF HELL.....

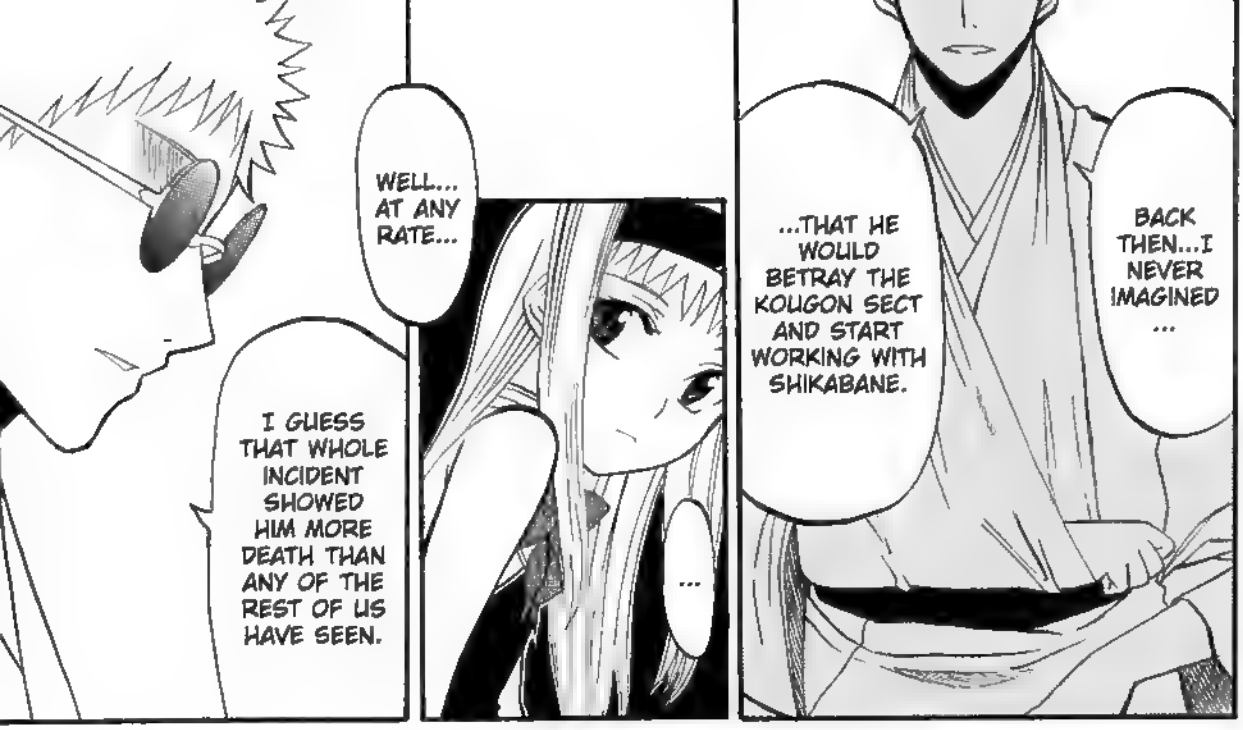

EVEN AKASHA... NEVER SPOKE ABOUT THE EVENTS OF THAT DAY.....
AS FOR WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED THERE...
NONE OF THE INVES-TIGATORS COULD SAY.....

LOOK-ING BACK ...
IT'S LIKELY THAT BACK THEN .....
...AKASHA HAD ALREADY SUFFERED A MENTAL BREAK...

...AKASHA HAD SUPPOSEDLY BEEN STANDING, SLEEPLESS, AT THE SITE OF HIS SQUAD'S MASSACRE.....
ONE WEEK LATER..... HE KILLED HIS OWN RECOVERING CORPSE PRINCESS, STOLE THE SUTRA, AND FLED THE HEAD TEMPLE. UNTIL THAT DAY THOUGH...

ME, AKASHA, AND ANOTHER NAMED SADA-HIRO.
THERE WAS A PERIOD DURING OUR TRAINING WHEN WE SHARED A ROOM.
... WELL, YEAH.

YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT THIS.
ABOUT THE TRAITOR MONK, I MEAN.
... TAGAMI.


I GUESS THAT WHOLE INCIDENT SHOWED HIM MORE DEATH THAN ANY OF THE REST OF US HAVE SEEN.
WELL... AT ANY RATE...
...
...THAT HE WOULD BETRAY THE KOUGON SECT AND START WORKING WITH SHIKABANE.
BACK THEN...I NEVER IMAGINED ...

THIS SWARM HE'S ALLIED HIMSELF WITH IS THE VERY INCARNATION OF DEATH THAT HE PURSUES .....!
...HE WANTS TO MAKE A NAME FOR HIMSELF, NOW.
AND THAT'S WHY...

.....
IS THAT SO?
...I DON'T GET ANY OF THIS.
SORRY!
I KNOW I ASKED FOR AN EXPLANATION, BUT...
SLURRRRP
.....

.....SHOULDN'T YOU ALREADY KNOW PLENTY FROM YOUR DAYS OF TRAINING...?
AT LEAST THE FUNDAMENTALS.
I FOR-GOT ALL THAT !!
TOTALLY.
WELL... ANY-WAY...
TAP
IN ORDER TO KEEP THEIR POWER FROM GROWING ANY FARTHER...
...I'D BETTER DO SOME RESEARCH ON THE SUTRA AND SEALED MANDALA.
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE A CON-TRACTING MONK...
FLAIL
COME ON, I MEAN ...!!
...
RING
NO MATTER. USE THE RESOURCES HERE.
I'LL GET THE NEC-ESSARY PERMIS-SIONS.
.....
SURE ...
REACH
THEN GIMME DRINK MONEY!
...
THIS GIRL...
SAKI.
MAKINA HOSHIMURA'S EXAMINATION AND TREAT-MENT ARE FINISHED.
GET THOSE TWO AND HEAD UP-STAIRS.
... YES.
UNDER-STOOD.
THAT'S MY PHONE.
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF MY RE-SEARCH.
I'M OUT OF SODA... GET ME MORE!

YEAH ?
KEISEI.
LOOK AT THESE.
FWAP
IT'S SHIKABANE RESEARCH FROM THE PAST TWO MONTHS.
HMM. MAYBE ORANGE JUICE?
THERE'S ONE PHOTO THAT CAUGHT MY EYE.
THIS STARTED AROUND THE SAME TIME AS THE OUTBREAK OF SHIKABANE, SO I'VE BEEN HOPING TO FIND A CONNECTION .....
?
FLIP
THIS IS .....
WRAP

ARA-GAMI-SAN.
HUG
THANK YOU.

STILL, IT'S MY DUTY TO FIGHT.
RIGHT... I'LL BE CAREFUL.
BUT...

THOSE WOUNDS COULD OPEN AGAIN IF YOU'RE ATTACKED.
CORPSE PRINCESS OR NOT, YOUR BODY IS FUNDA-MENTALLY HUMAN.
SURE.
YOU STILL HAVE INTERNAL INJURIES THOUGH, SO DON'T OVERDO IT.

.....
UM.
WHAT IS IT?

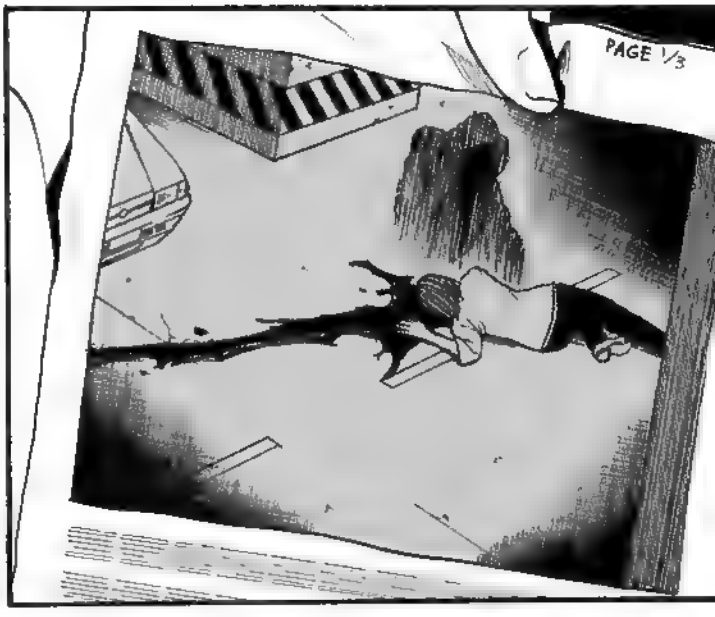
STARE
.....
PEEL

BUT NOW SHE EXISTS SOLELY TO KILL SHIKA-BANE...
MAKINA HOSHIMURA... A GIRL FROM ANOTHER ONE OF THE TEN GREAT HOLY FAMILIES, LIKE MY OWN.....
...

EH !?
AH..... UH... UM.
CLATTER
FLUSTERED
NOTHING!! IT'S JUST THAT I HEARD ABOUT YOUR PAST...
ABOUT..... BROTHER TAGAMI'S CONTRACT WITH YOU ...
CLATTER
... OH.
UMM. SO I JUST WANTED TO OFFER TO HELP HOWEVER I CAN, BUT...I DIDN'T EXACTLY KNOW HOW TO BREAK THE ICE.....
FLAIL
FLAIL
AH!
AND PLEASE, CALL ME "RIKA"...
... THANK YOU.
BUT ...
MY BATTLE IS A PERSONAL ONE.
I'M GOING TO HUNT DOWN THE SHIKABANE WHO KILLED ME AND MY FAMILY.
THAT'S THE ONLY REASON I DECIDED TO BECOME A CORPSE PRINCESS .....
DO YOU HAPPEN TO REMEMBER..... WHO THOSE SHIKABANE WERE?
.....
I DON'T RECALL MUCH.
AND ALL MY RESEARCH ...
...ONLY TURNED UP ONE CLUE.....

THEY'RE CALLED THE "SEVEN STARS."
CLENCH
AND EACH SHIKABANE IN THE SWARM HAS THE BIG DIPPER CARVED ON HIS BODY .....

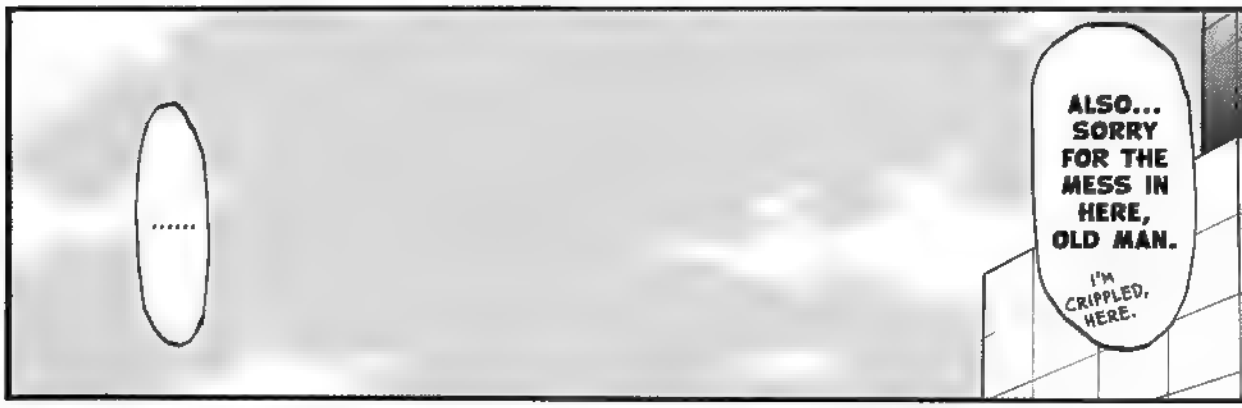
THIS WAS TAKEN BY A SECURITY CAMERA IN THE PARKING LOT WHERE IT HAPPENED ...
THE BLACK SHADOW HOVERING NEAR THE VICTIM..... DO YOU SEE IT?

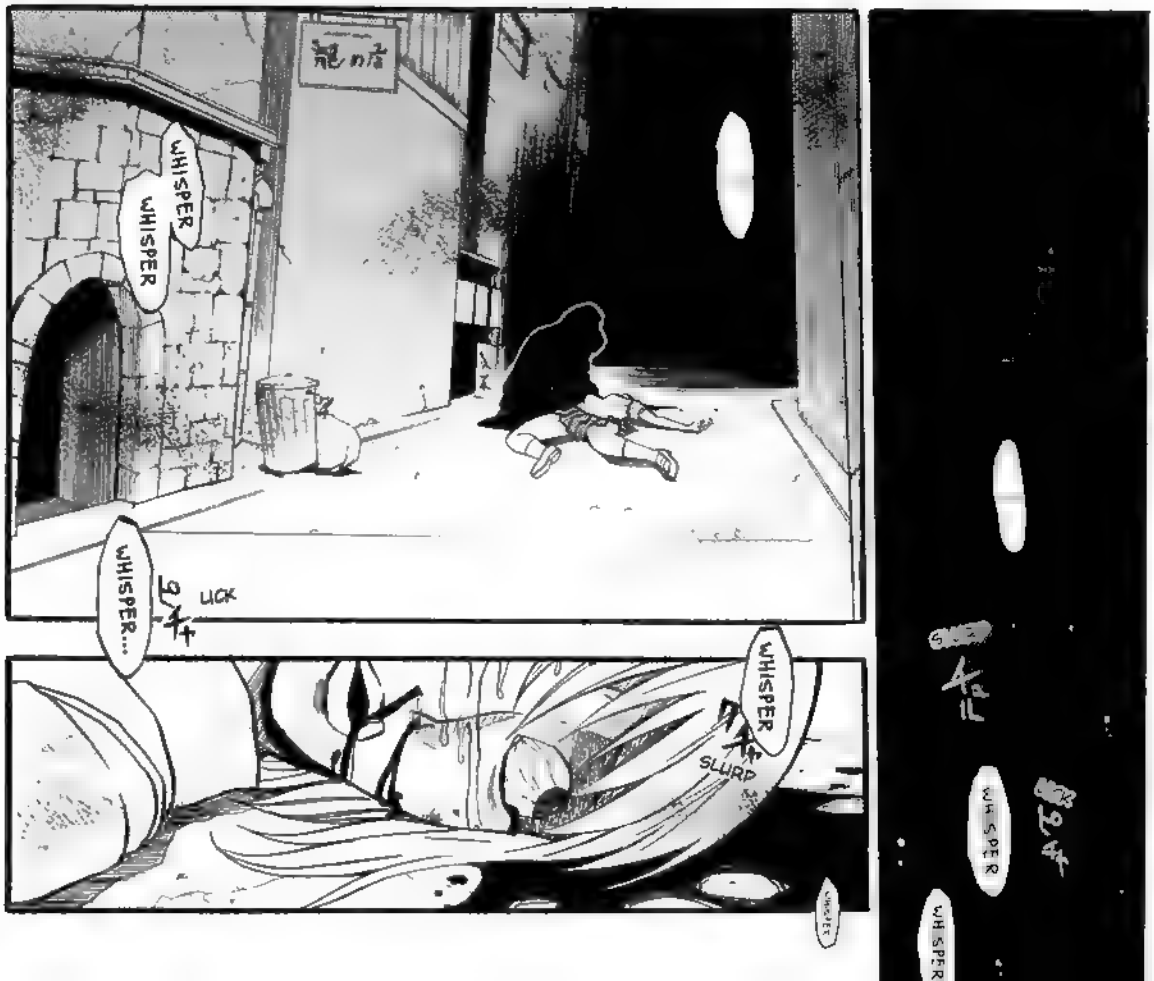

PAGE 1/3

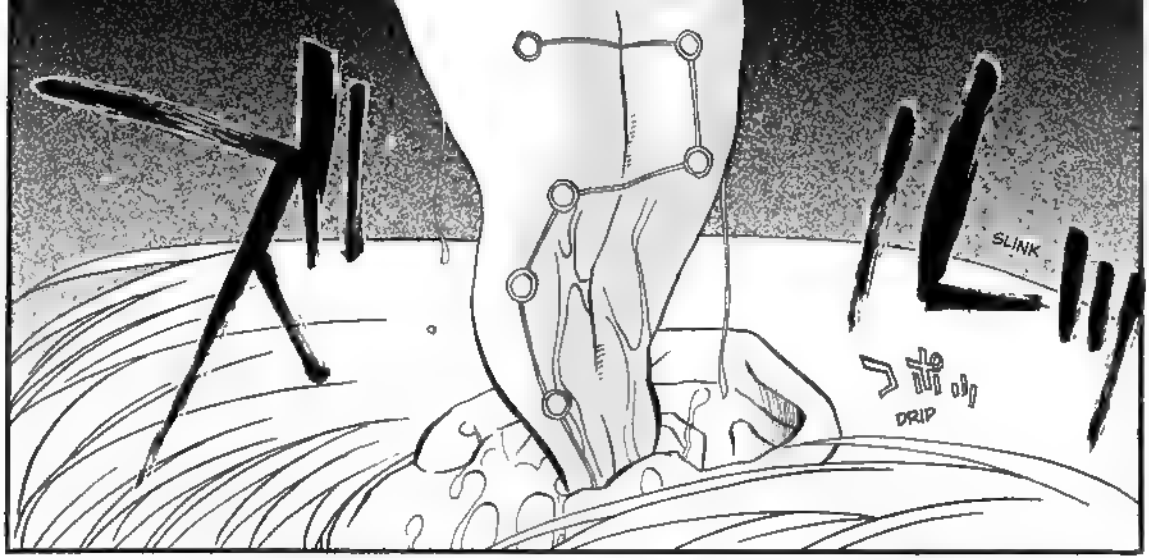
THE SEVEN STARS .....!

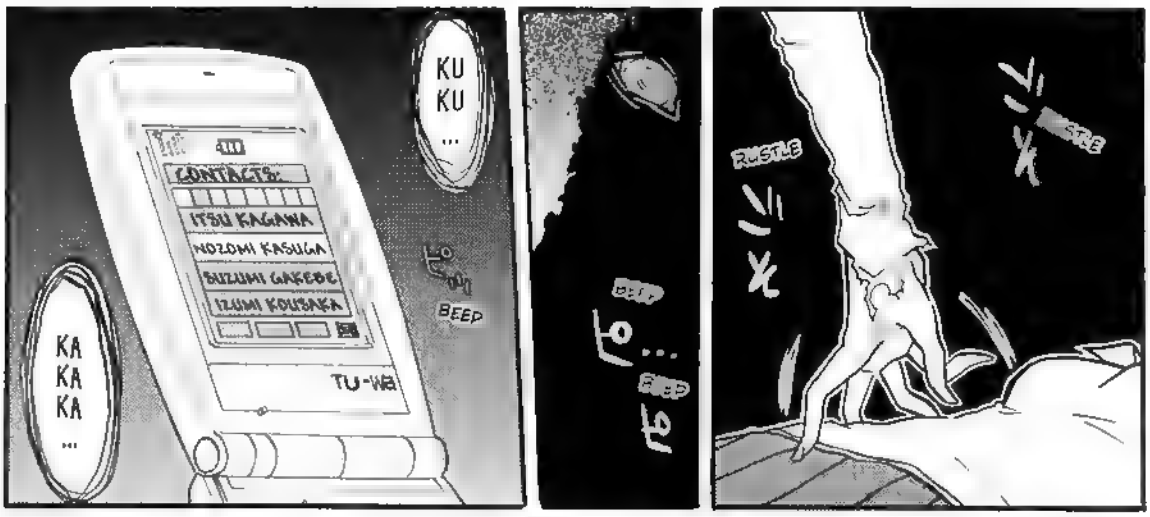
...
IF THAT'S WHAT WE THINK IT IS...
...IT COULD MEAN REAL TROUBLE FOR YOU.
BECAUSE IN THAT CASE, THE TARGETS OF HOSHI-MURA'S REVENGE ...
...ARE INVOLVED WITH THE UNCLEAN BUNCH.....
HEAVEN FORBID ...
...SHE SEEKS THEM OUT.
YOUR CORPSE PRINCESS MAY FIND HERSELF ...
...UP AGAINST ALL THE SHIKABANE OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH .....!
.....
IF POSSI-BLE...
CRUMPLE
...I HOPE I CAN KEEP HER FROM RUSH-ING OFF.
EX-ACTLY.
ANYHOW, I'M LEAVING THIS TO YOU.
CONTACT ME IF YOU NEED BACKUP.
TAP
BUT .....
DON'T BE HASTY, KEISEI.
IF WE PLAY OUR HAND BEFORE WE KNOW HOW FAR THEIR REACH IS..... WE'LL MEET OUR ENDS.

THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, OLD MAN.
YEAH... I GOT THAT.


.....
ALSO... SORRY FOR THE MESS IN HERE, OLD MAN.
I'M CRIPPLED, HERE.


WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER...
LICK
WHISPER
SLURP
WHISPER
WHISPER

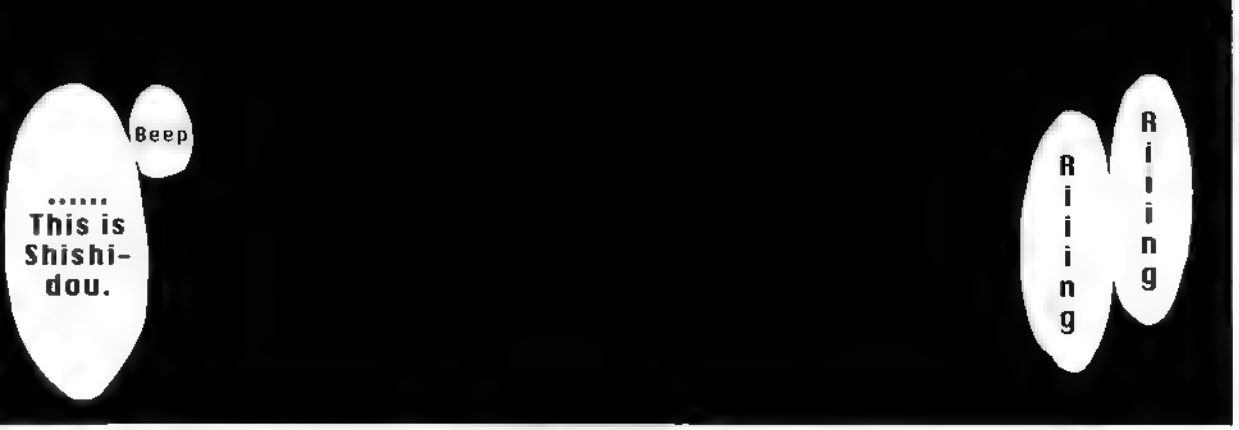

SLINK
DRIP

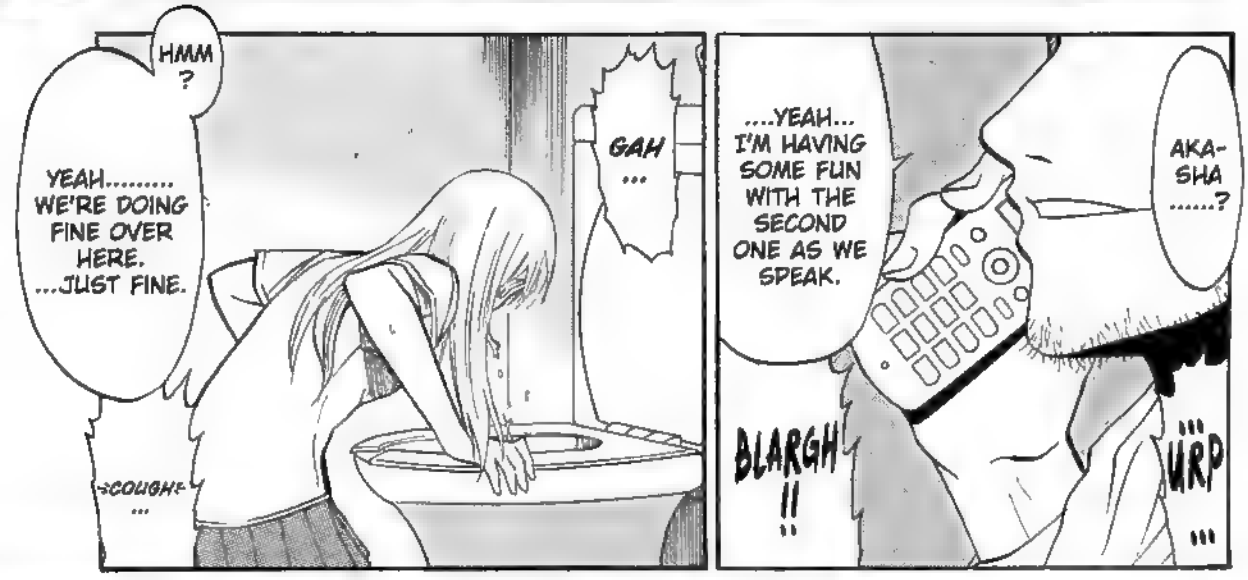

KU KU ...
CONTACTS
ITSU KAGAWA
NOZOMI KASUGA
SUZUMI GARCEE
IZUMI KOUSAKA
TU-WA
BEEP
KA KA KA ...
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

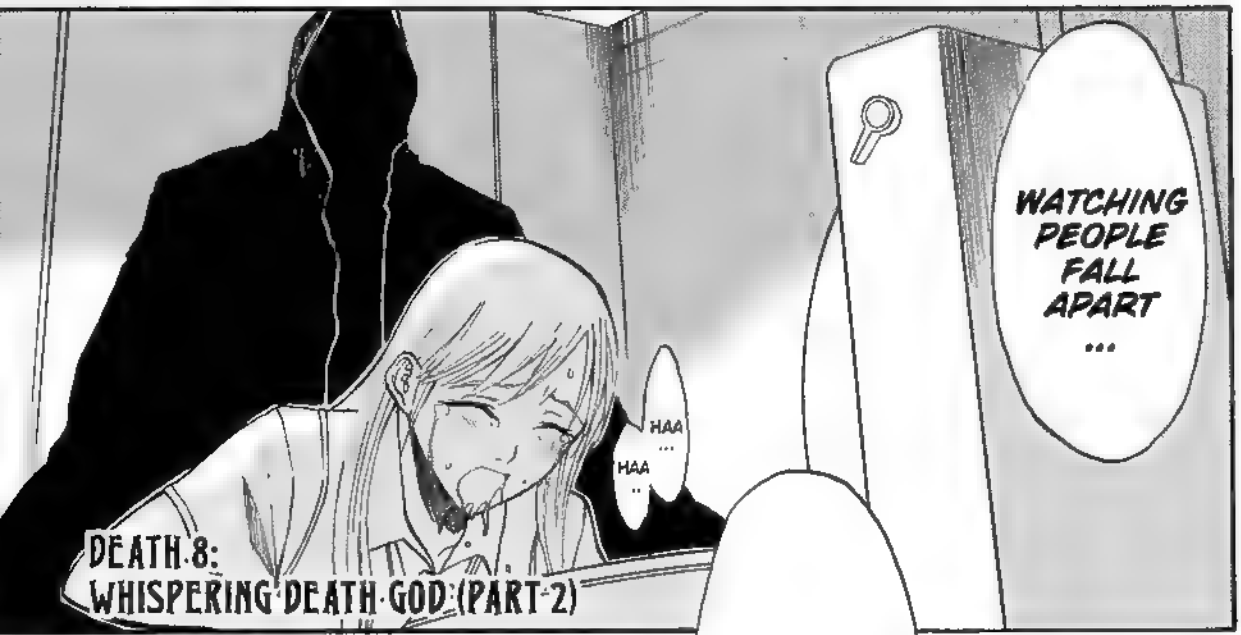
KA.
KA-KA-KA KA.
KA-KA-KA-KA-KA.

## Hiroshige Ushijima

My supervisor miswrote this guy's first and last names. In one sense, he's the most pitiable character in the whole story.



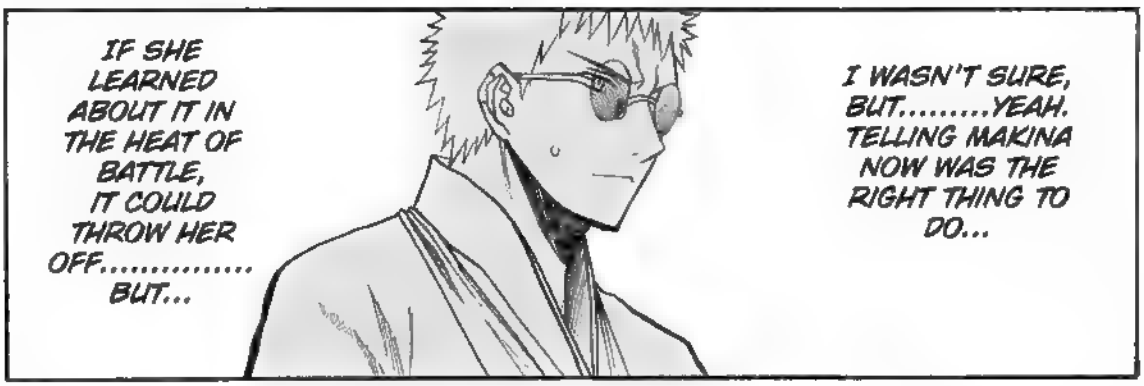

## DEATH 8: WHISPERING DEATH GOD (PART 2)

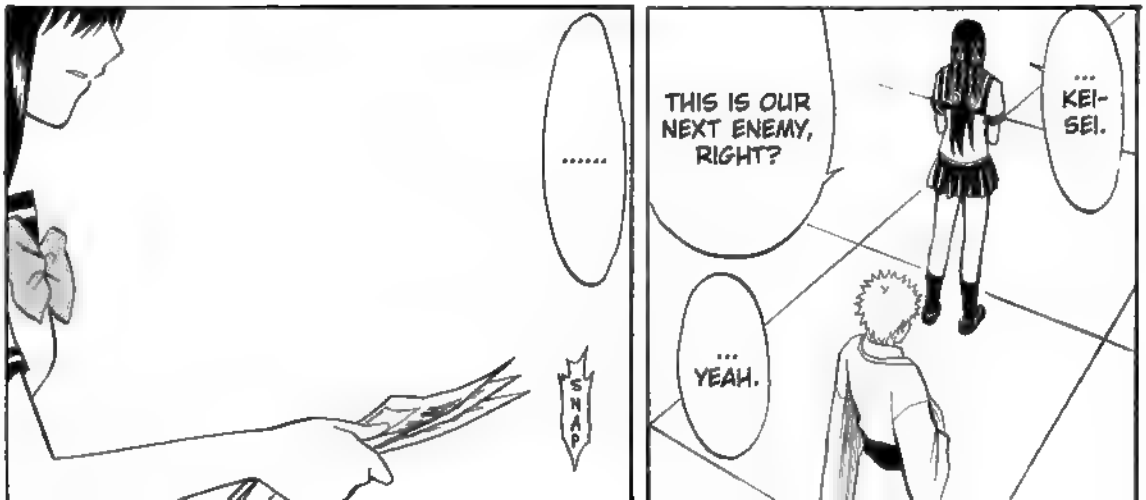
WHEN I TOUCH THIS HERE BOX...
IT TURNS UP MY ANGER AND HATRED TO THE MAX. IT'S GREAT.
...YEAH, PRETTY GOOD...
TOUCH
...IS THAT SO?
AND WHAT OF THE "CASKET"?

# DEATH 8: WHISPERING DEATH GOD (PART 2)

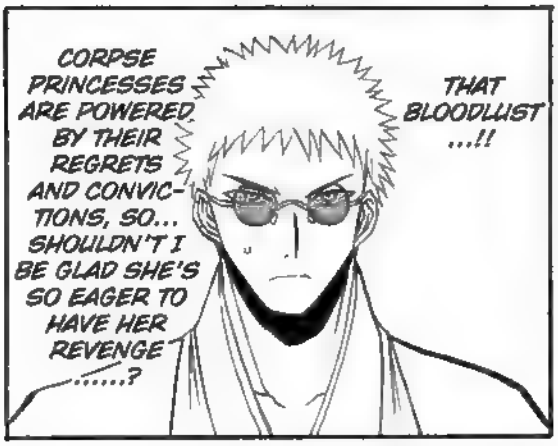
...MR. WHISPER.

.....


IF SHE LEARNED ABOUT IT IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE, IT COULD THROW HER OFF..... BUT...
I WASN'T SURE, BUT.....YEAH. TELLING MAKINA NOW WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO...


.....
SNAG
THIS IS OUR NEXT ENEMY, RIGHT?
... KEI-SEI.
... YEAH.

GOOD
.....


CORPSE PRINCESSES ARE POWERED BY THEIR REGRETS AND CONVICTIONS, SO... SHOULDN'T I BE GLAD SHE'S SO EAGER TO HAVE HER REVENGE.....?
THAT BLOODLUST ...!!

.....

FWOOM
...!

JUST LIKE THE ONE YOU DEFEATED NOT TOO LONG AGO.
THE SHIKABANE DRAWN IN BY THOSE STRONG CONVICTIONS BECOME PART OF THE SWARM.
IT'S ONE OF THE FEW SWARMS WHOSE SHIKABANE HAVE ADHERENTS.
...THE SEVEN STARS...

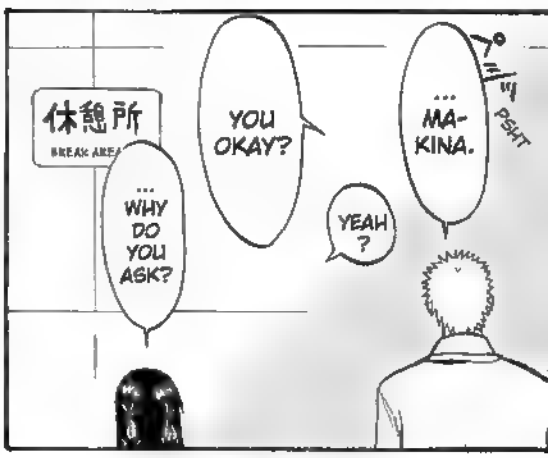
THE SEVEN STARS STAND OUT AMONG SHIKABANE SWARMS.
THEY APPEAR TO BE INTERESTED IN MORE THAN MINDLESS SLAUGHTER.
BUT IF THEY'RE IN FACT ACTING IN PURSUIT OF A SPECIFIC GOAL, THAT GOAL ISN'T CLEAR TO US.
RIGHT.
.....

IF WE WANT A LEAD ON THEM...
...WE'LL HAVE TO QUESTION AND KILL THEIR FOLLOWERS ...
A SWARM THAT MANIFESTS LIKE A PLAGUE AND KILLS .....
...THEN DISAPPEARS INTO THE WIND.....

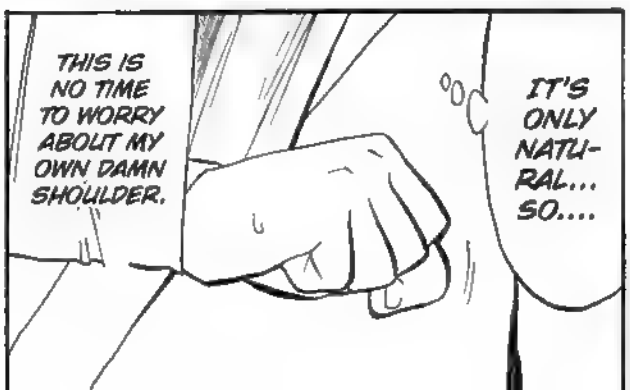
RIGHT.
GOT IT.
WHAT I GAVE YOU IS ALL WE KNOW.
GOOD LUCK, KEISEI AND MAKINA.
I'M LEAVING THE EXECUTION OF THIS OPERATION TO YOU TWO.
WELL.
I'M NOT SURE WHETHER OR NOT TO SEE IT AS A SILVER LINING...
...IF YOUR PURSUIT REVEALS THEIR POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT WITH THE UNCLEAN BUNCH .....

OH.
THANKS.
MM.
CLUNK

I'M FINE, REALLY.
I MEAN... THIS WHOLE THING ...
YOU...
"WHY" ...? REALLY ?


休憩所
BREAK AREA
... WHY DO YOU ASK?
YOU OKAY?
YEAH ?
... MA-KINA.
PSHT

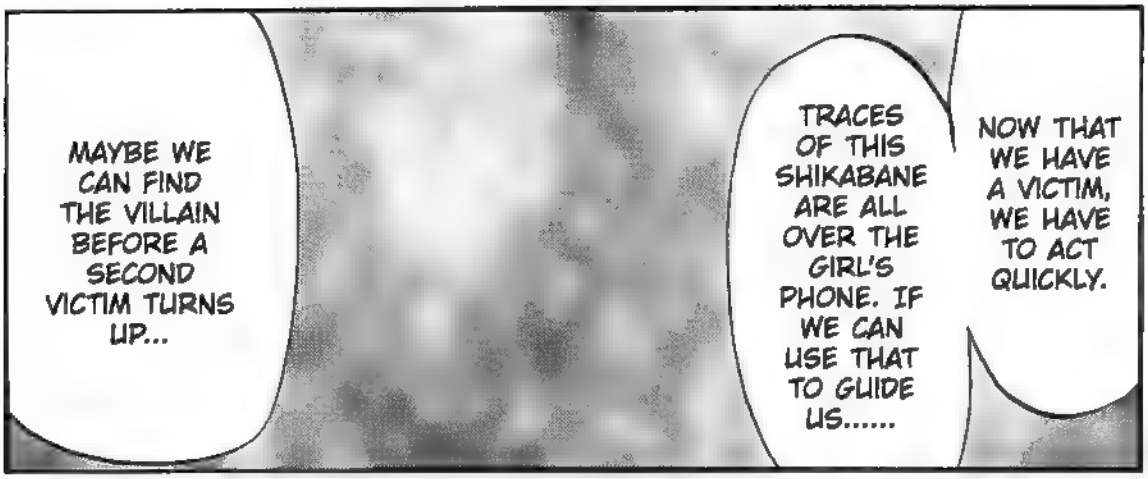
BUT DON'T WORRY. I'LL FIGHT THE SAME WAY I ALWAYS HAVE.
OF COURSE I'VE BEEN AFTER MY FAMILY'S KILLERS...

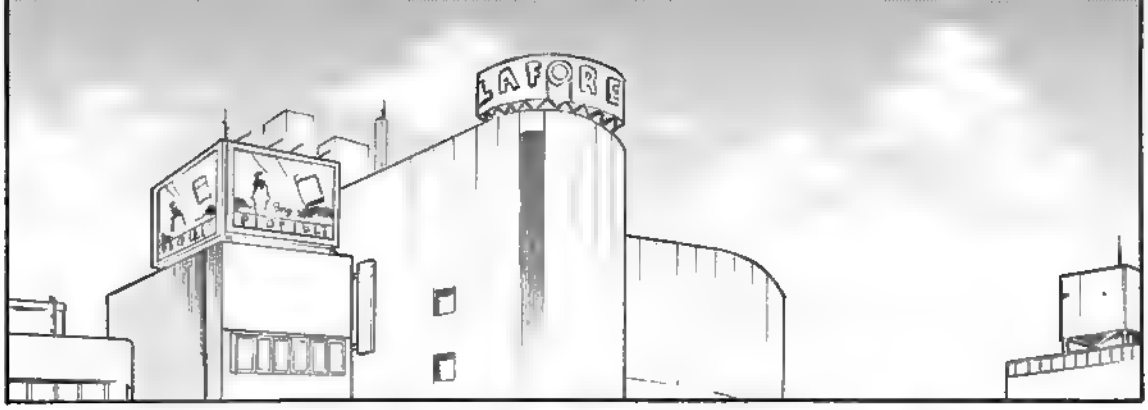

THIS IS NO TIME TO WORRY ABOUT MY OWN DAMN SHOULDER.
IT'S ONLY NATU-RAL... SO....

MAKINA..... I KNEW IT...SHE'S AMPED UP...
... THAT RIGHT ?

FROM WHAT WE'VE LEARNED, MOST RECENTLY THERE WERE THREE PEOPLE RECEIVING CALLS FROM HIM.....
BUT THIS MORNING ONE OF THEIR BODIES WAS DISCOVERED.
THIS SHIKABANE APPARENTLY USES A DATING SITE AND CELL PHONES TO CHOOSE AND STALK HIS VICTIMS.
CLUNK
SO HOW ABOUT THIS CASE, KEISEI?
RIGHT.

*GARBAGE LABEL: CANS


MAYBE WE CAN FIND THE VILLAIN BEFORE A SECOND VICTIM TURNS UP...
TRACES OF THIS SHIKABANE ARE ALL OVER THE GIRL'S PHONE. IF WE CAN USE THAT TO GUIDE US.....
NOW THAT WE HAVE A VICTIM, WE HAVE TO ACT QUICKLY.


LAFORE

IS THIS REALLY A GOOD PLAN ...?
HUH?
YOU STILL NERVOUS ABOUT IT?

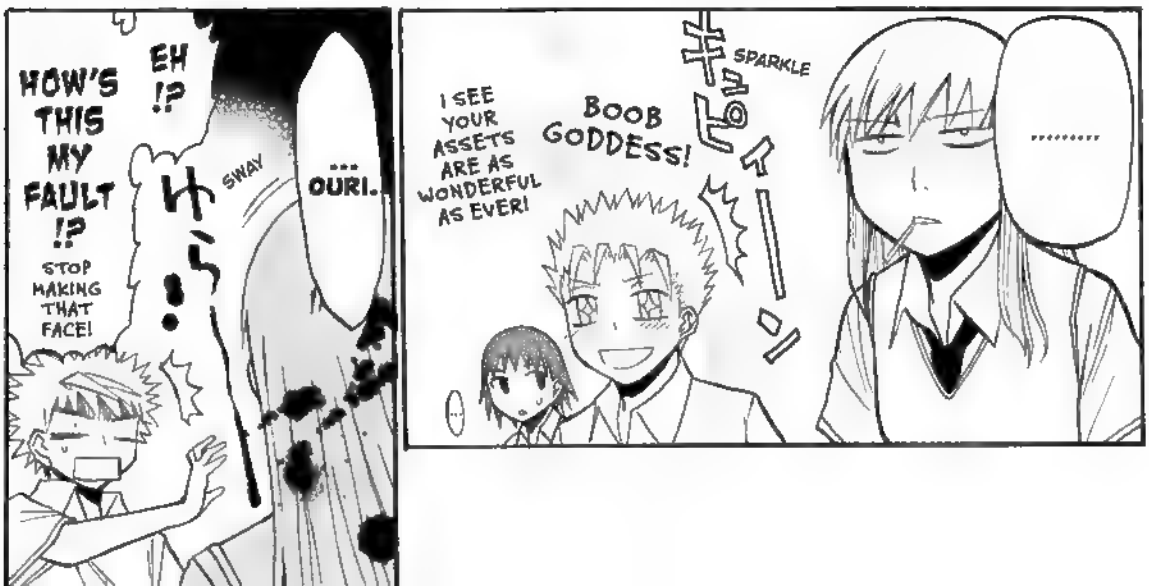
.....
DONUT

THE "OUT-OF-LUCK OURI DECOY PLOY"'S GONNA GO GREAT!
IT EVEN RHYMES.
.....
ABOUT THAT...
ばしっ SLAP
IT'S FINE...! TRUST ME.
I CAN VOUCH FOR HOW FREAKING UNLUCKY YOU ARE!

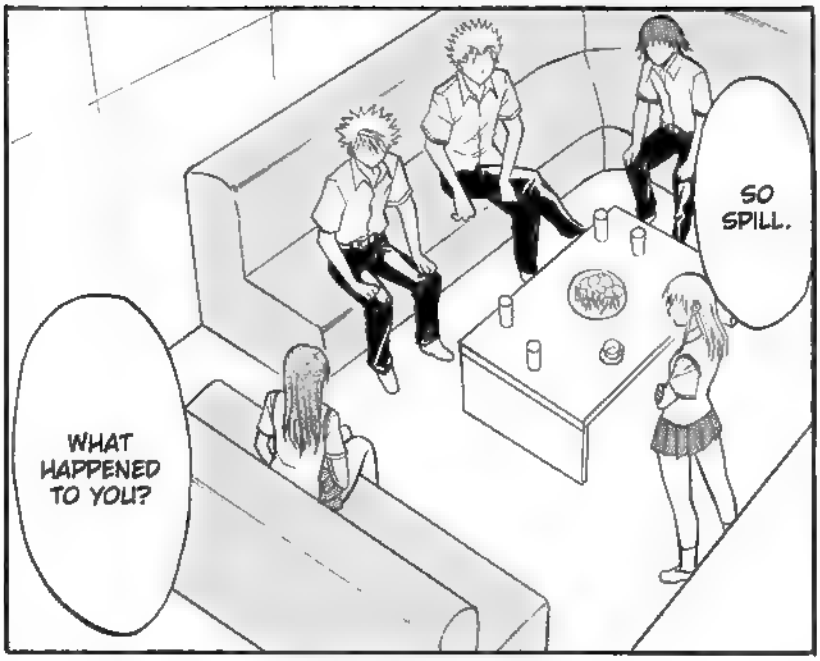
SCRITCH
BUT I'M SURE THAT WON'T HAP—
IF WE FIND ONE, IT'LL BE HARD TO PROTECT HER WHILE LOOKING FOR THE OTHER TWO.
THE ONLY PROBLEM'D BE IF THE THREE MISSING GIRLS AREN'T TOGETHER.
WORRIED OR NOT, WE'VE ALREADY GOT A REPLY FROM MR. WHISPER.

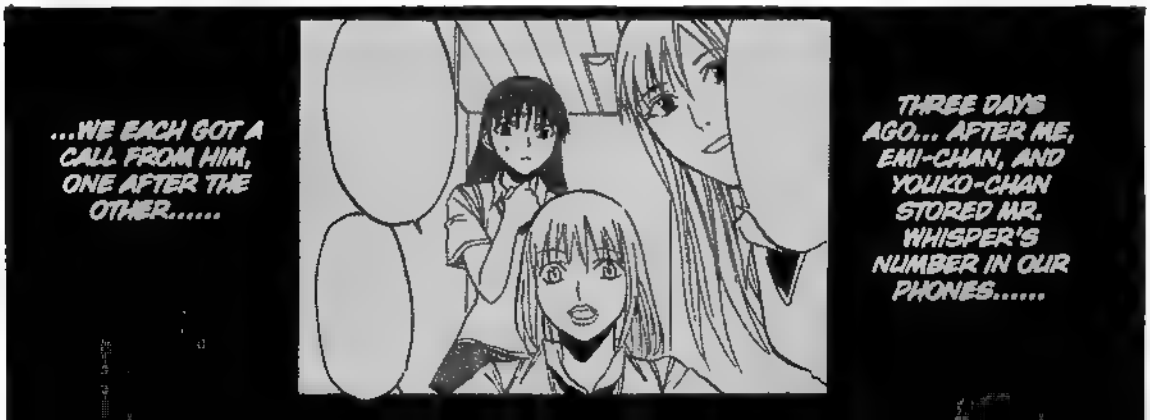
—PEN
.....

HAA.
AH.
HAA.
.....


HOW'S THIS MY FAULT !?
STOP MAKING THAT FACE!
EH !?
SWAY
...OURI.
I SEE YOUR ASSETS ARE AS WONDERFUL AS EVER!
BOOB GODDESS!
SPARKLE
.....

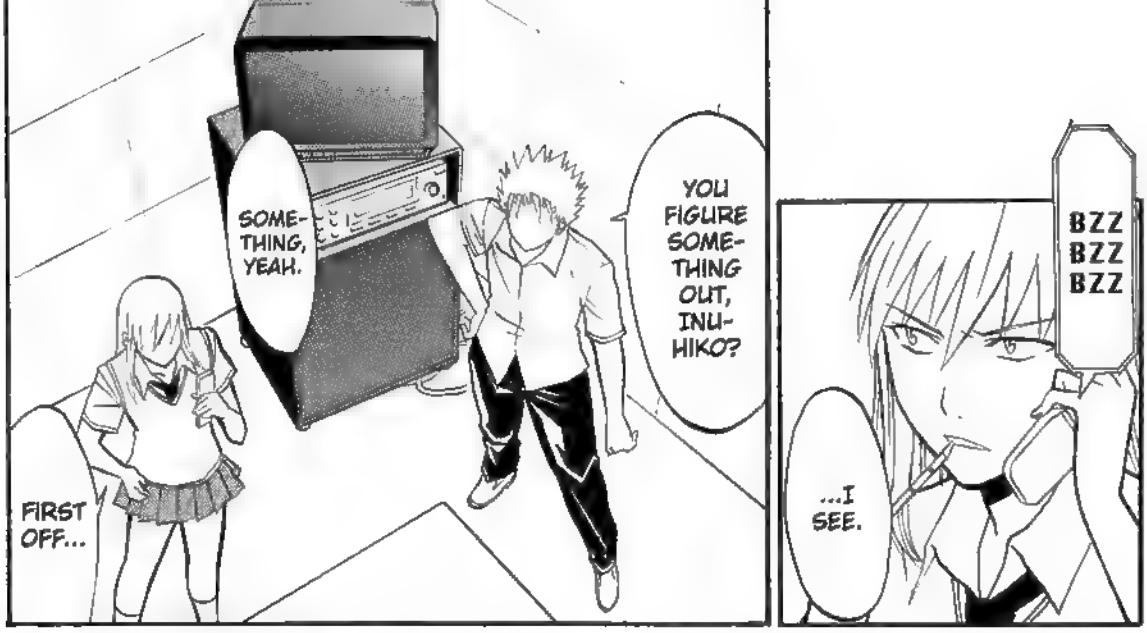
*SIGN: KARAOKE

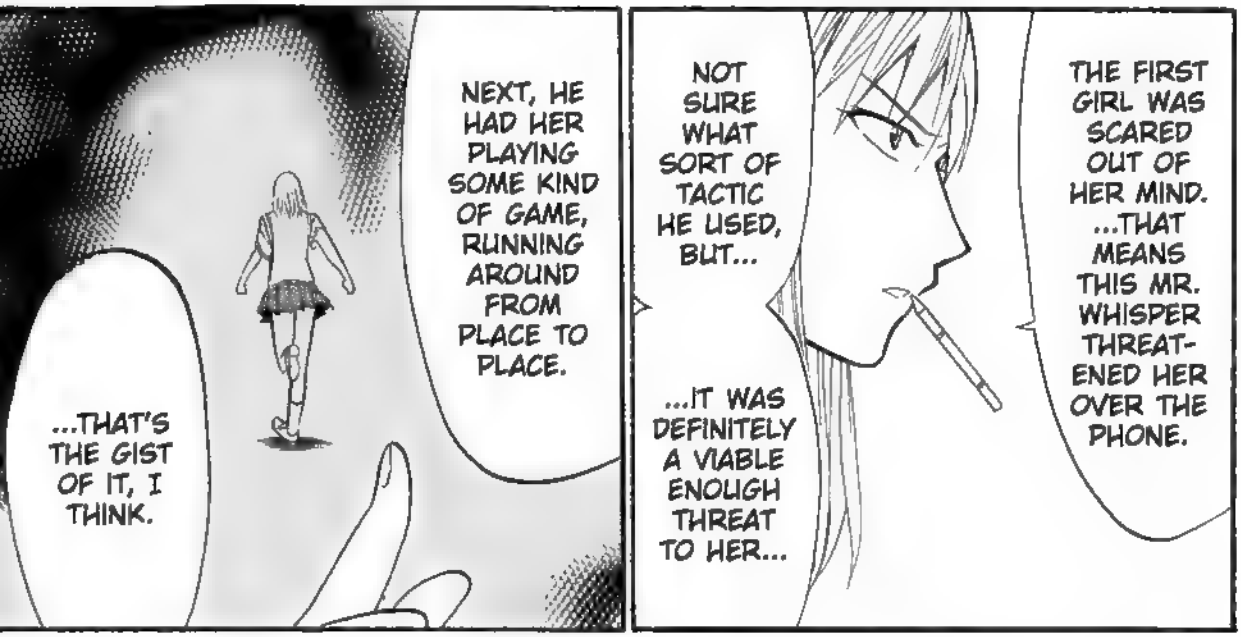



...WE EACH GOT A CALL FROM HIM, ONE AFTER THE OTHER.....
THREE DAYS AGO... AFTER ME, EMI-CHAN, AND YUUKO-CHAN STORED MR. WHISPER'S NUMBER IN OUR PHONES.....

EMI-CHAN WAS EXCITED. SHE KEPT TRYING TO CALL HIM BACK.
BUT I GUESS THE LINE WAS BUSY, BECAUSE SHE COULDN'T GET THROUGH ...
BUT...
...
ABOUT TWO HOURS LATER, I GOT UP FOR A MINUTE, AND WHEN I CAME BACK...
ONLY YOUKO-CHAN WAS THERE.
I ASKED WHERE EMI-CHAN HAD GONE.
YOUKO-CHAN TOLD ME THAT EMI-CHAN HAD GOTTEN A CALL FROM MR. WHISPER AND TURNED WHITE AS A GHOST.....
I...WAS WORRIED. SO I STARTED LOOKING FOR EMI-CHAN.....
THEN, THIS MORNING, YOUKO-CHAN ALSO GOT A CALL FROM MR. WHISPER .....
SQUEEZE
THEN YOUKO-CHAN WAS GONE TOO. ...SO I'VE BEEN SEARCHING ON MY OWN.
.....
HMPH ...
YOU TRY CALLING THEM WHEN THEY DISAP-PEARED?
AH, YEAH ...!
I DID WHEN EMI-CHAN VANISHED..... OVER AND OVER... BUT...

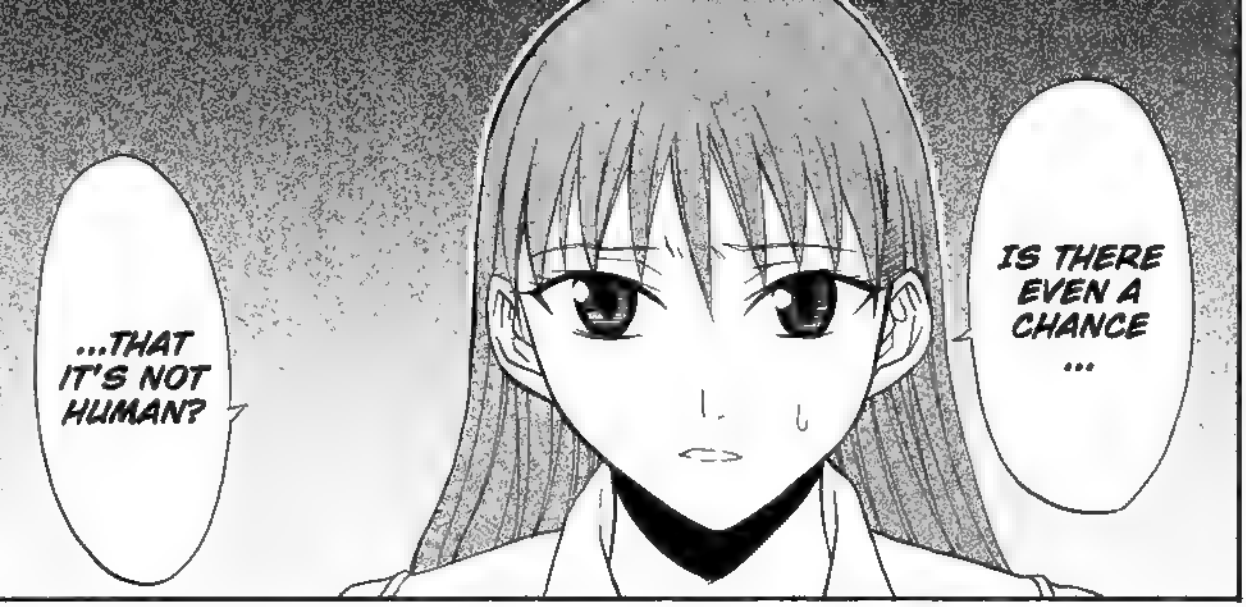
GOTTA WIN..... THE GAME.....
STILL HAVE TEN MINUTES TO MAKE IT.....
I'M... AT...THE STATION. ...GOTTA GET ON A TRAIN.....
...
HELLO ...
EMI-CHAN? YOU OKAY? WHERE ARE YOU?
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT .....!?
...? HOLD ON!! EMI?
I WISH .....
...I COULD... STOP THIS...
EMI !?
I JUST ...
SORRY..... YOUKO... NOZOMI...
.....HEY. SHOW ME YOUR PHONE FOR A SEC.
OH. OKAY... BUT...
BOTH THEIR LINES ARE BUSY ALL THE TIME NOW...
BEEP
BEEP
...
IT WAS..... SO SCARY...
AND IN THE END... WE DIDN'T LEARN ANYTHING.


FIRST OFF...
SOME-THING, YEAH.
YOU FIGURE SOME-THING OUT, INU-HIKO?
...I SEE.
BZZ BZZ BZZ


...THAT'S THE GIST OF IT, I THINK.
NEXT, HE HAD HER PLAYING SOME KIND OF GAME, RUNNING AROUND FROM PLACE TO PLACE.
NOT SURE WHAT SORT OF TACTIC HE USED, BUT...
...IT WAS DEFINITELY A VIABLE ENOUGH THREAT TO HER...
THE FIRST GIRL WAS SCARED OUT OF HER MIND. ...THAT MEANS THIS MR. WHISPER THREAT-ENED HER OVER THE PHONE.

AT LEAST THAT WOULD EXPLAIN HOW THEY'RE ABLE TO MAKE THESE PERSUASIVE THREATS SO FAST.
IT'S POSSIBLE THAT SEVERAL PEOPLE ARE SHARING ONE PHONE AND ALL PRETENDING TO BE MR. WHISPER.
...? SAME GOAL...? IF IT WAS THE SAME NUMBER, THEN IT'S THE SAME GUY, NO?
POP
...THEN WE'D BETTER HURRY, OR THINGS COULD GET BAD.
IF THE SECOND GIRL GOT A CALL THIS MORNING FROM THE SAME GUY WITH THE SAME GOAL...

...
HMPH.
GUESS SO.
TO START WITH...IT'D BE DAMN DIFFICULT FOR ONE GUY ALONE TO KIDNAP ENOUGH PEOPLE TO BECOME AN URBAN LEGEND.
SO MAYBE IT MAKES MORE SENSE TO ASSUME WE'RE UP AGAINST A GROUP OF BADDIES?
ARE THEY HUMAN?
KIDNAPPERS .....?
... MAYBE ...
COULD IT BE?
...
1
BIND YOU'LL WAY OUT THROUGH THE DOOR BEHIND US
SORRY. BUT I CAN ONLY TAKE YOU THIS FAR.
EH?
.....
IT'S JUST, COULD A HUMAN EVEN PULL OFF... WHAT MR. WHISPER IS DOING?
AH..... SORRY.
HMM ?

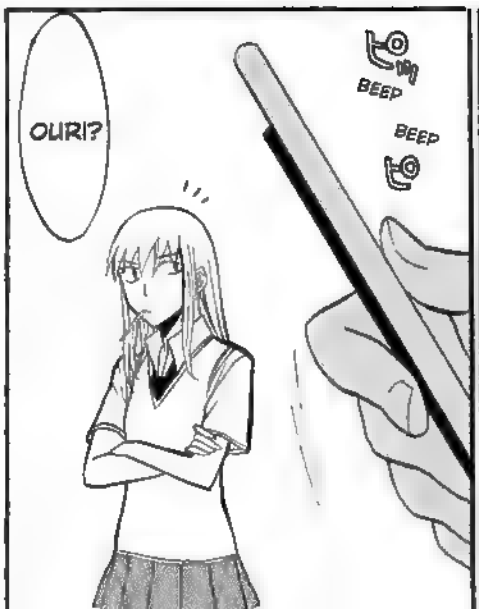

IS THERE EVEN A CHANCE ...
...THAT IT'S NOT HUMAN?

WELL .....
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...
WHY DO YOU ASK?

.....
NOT HUMAN .....?
LIKE A SPIRIT THEN ...?

...N-NO REASON, REALLY.....
THEY'D NEVER BELIEVE ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE...
UMM ...
WELL ...

MY BIG BRO'S A MONK AT SEKKU TEMPLE.
HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP...

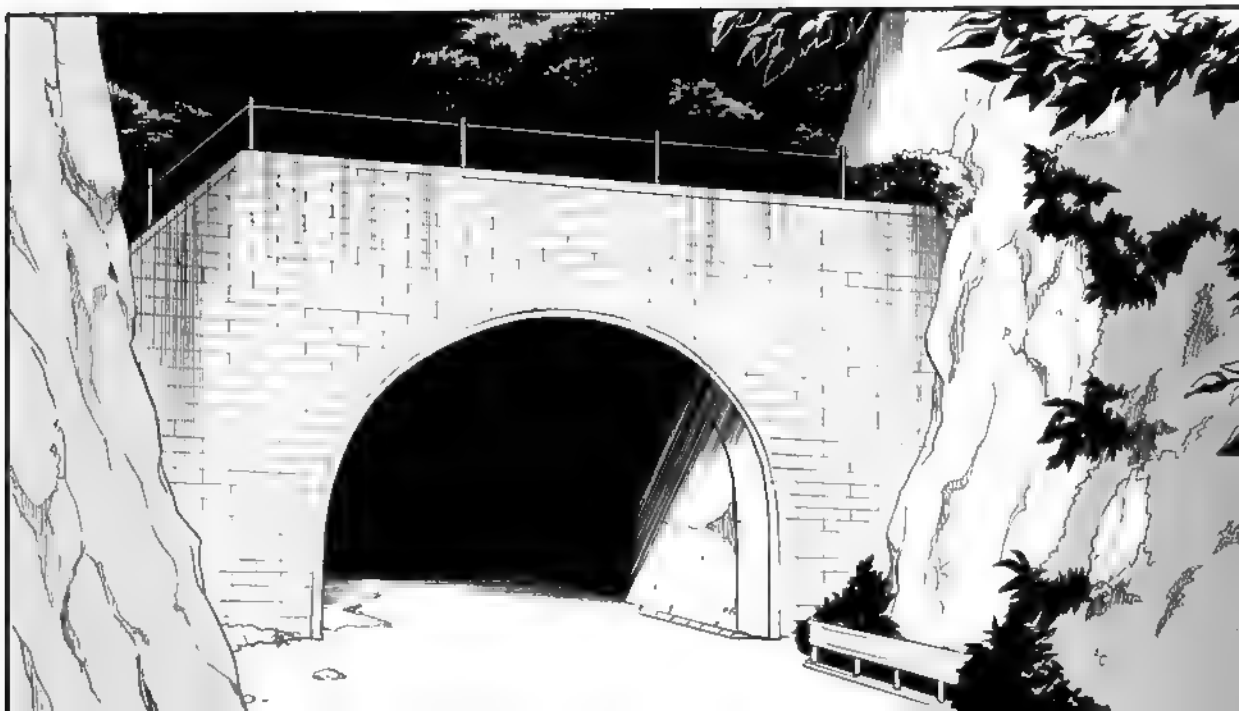

OURI?
BEEP
BEEP

.....

FOR NOW... WE CAN GUESS WHERE THE FIRST GIRL WAS BASED ON WHAT SHE SAID AND THE BACKGROUND NOISES IN THE CONVERSATION.
BEEP
WE'LL CHECK SOME MAPS AND TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHERE SHE WAS BEING LED...!
...DAMN. NO ANSWER.
WONDER WHY. GUESS HE'S WORKING ...
OH YEAH?
THAT'S TOO BAD.
WE'VE GOT TO FIND THEM QUICKLY...
...IF WE'RE GONNA SAVE THEM.

BUT FIRST, LET'S PLAY ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS TO SEE WHO PAYS FOR THE KARAOKE BOOTH.
SURE THING.
YES!
YEAH.
RIGHT.
OH, GOD OF ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS, BESTOW UNTO ME YOUR BLESSINGS...
THIS BASTARD ...

A MAN TOYING WITH FATE



A DEFUNCT RAILWAY WITH AN ABANDONED TUNNEL...
THE PERFECT PLACE FOR SHIKABANE TO HIDE.
YEAH.
I DON'T LIKE TO ANSWER WHILE WORKING THOUGH.
YEAH.
HEARING THE VOICE OF A LOVED ONE DULLS MY SENSES.
HMM ?
THAT PHONE CALL... IT WAS FROM YOUR FAMILY, NO?
..... KEISEI... WAS IT OKAY NOT TO ANSWER?
... RIGHT.
AND RIGHT NOW I NEED TO FOCUS ON TAKING DOWN THIS SHIKABANE.

IT'S AN INTERIOR MANAGE-MENT FACILITY FOR THE TUNNEL...
LET'S HEAD DOWN.
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
STEP
CREAK
CREAK
DRAG
DRAG
!
...YEAH.
COUGH
STINKS LIKE MIL-DEW.

DRAG
DRAG

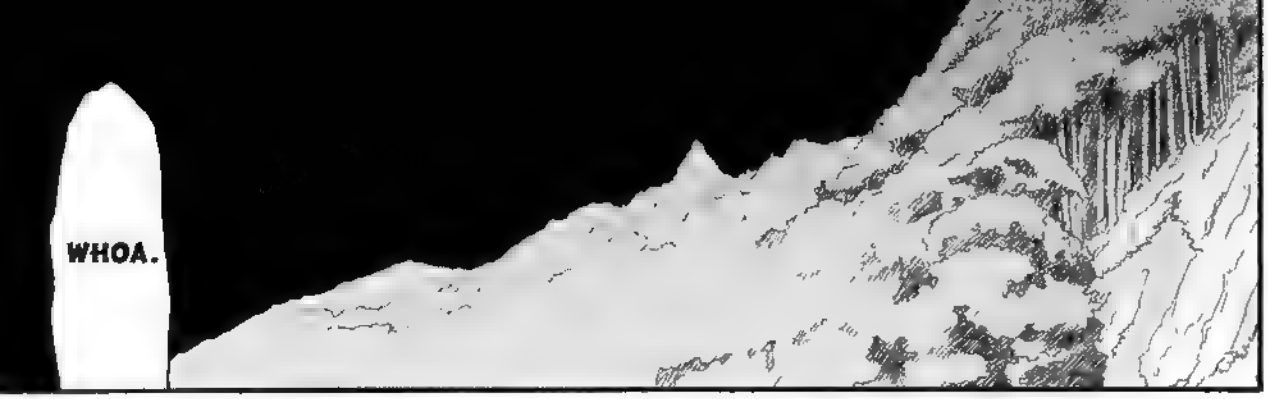
RIGHT !!
STOMP
MAKINA!! IT'S THE SECOND GIRL!!
!!

AH
TMP
WHOOSH

NOT HERE .....?
!
.....
HUH...?
THAT PHONE.....
Call Time: 58 Minutes
THERE'S A CALL IN PROGRESS...?
SHIVER
YOU WANT...
...SOME GOOD LUCK?
LOOM
OK

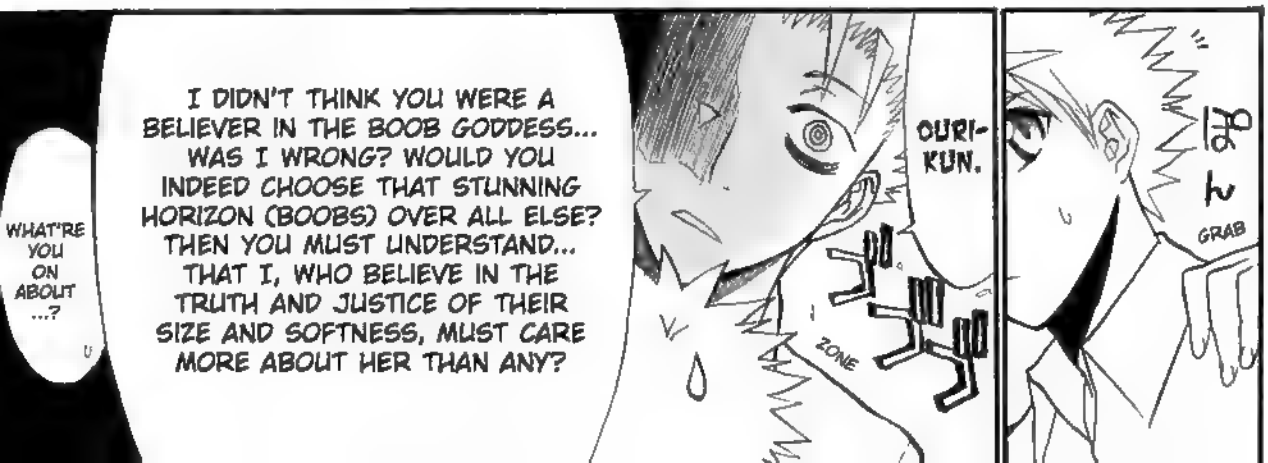
...TCH !!
WHIRL
SPLORT
KUH
HA..... HA HA.
FACE
PAN
BANG
BZZZ
!!
RING
RING
CLICK
Incoming Call
TRILL
BRRRING

KEIS-EI...
THIS IS BAD ...
INCOMING CALLS?
SO MANY... PHONES.
BLIMP
!
THIS SEVEN STAR MEMBER... I THINK HE POWERS HIMSELF USING CELL PHONES AND THE INTERNET...
AND HE CAN CREATE COPIES OF HIMSELF VIA ANY CURSED PHONE.....OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
... GEEZ.
STAND
THIS IS GONNA BE A LONG NIGHT.



D-8
EVERY OTHER LOCATION WE TRIED WAS A BUST, BUT THIS IS THE LAST ONE.
THERE'S NOT A LOT OF INFO TO WORK WITH, SO OF COURSE IT'S HARD TO NARROW IT DOWN.

MAP: IKAI CITY


WHAT'RE YOU ON ABOUT ...?
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE A BELIEVER IN THE BOOB GODDESS... WAS I WRONG? WOULD YOU INDEED CHOOSE THAT STUNNING HORIZON (BOOBS) OVER ALL ELSE? THEN YOU MUST UNDERSTAND... THAT I, WHO BELIEVE IN THE TRUTH AND JUSTICE OF THEIR SIZE AND SOFTNESS, MUST CARE MORE ABOUT HER THAN ANY?
OURI-KUN.
ZONE
GRAB

!
AH...
?
KASUGA-SAN?
RING
WELL, HOW WAS IT? YOU MANAGE TO TOUCH 'EM IN THE CONFUSION BACK THERE? HMM?
I'D NEVER DO THAT, MORON!
!?
FWOOM
I'M GETTING A CALL ...
...FROM MR. WHISPER.
BEEP
.....
NOD

.....!?
.....THE OTHERS..... DON'T SEE IT...?
...WH-WHAT THE—? WHAT'S THAT BLACK SHADOW .....?
LOOM
LOOM
BLUB
Y-YES?
H-HELLO .....?
!?
.....AND... WHY CAN I SEE IT?
...!? A CALL IN PROGRESS...? BUT WHEN DID I.....?
Call Time: 42 Seconds
WAIT, NO WAY!!
BUT WHY .....?
.....
BADUM
...SOME GOOD LUCK?
YOU WANT...
IN THAT CASE ...

...!MR. WHISPER?
IS THAT...
THEN.....
...TIME FOR A GAME.

BUT IF EVEN ONE OF YOU GETS A SCRATCH.....
I'M TAKING YOUR EAR.
TWITCH
LICK
I'M GONNA KNOCK DOWN THAT TREE RIGHT THERE.
IF YOU ALL SURVIVE, YOU WIN.
ROUND 1.

WHOOSH
!
WATCH OU—
EH?
WHOOM
CRASH

!
...
STEP
RUN AWAY !!
BAIA
COUGH
QUICK!!
STAND
GUH
HAA.
TCH
COUGH

I COULD SEE HIM!!
EH?
IT'S MR. WHIS-PER!!
WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED, OURI!?
A BLACK SHADOW NEXT TO KASUGA-SAN .....!
TMP
TMP
TMP

AH..... NO, SORRY.
I WAS FOCUSED ON MY PHONE...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, KASUGA-SAN?
DID YOU SEE HIM?
I THINK ...
IT'S BECAUSE I ALSO HAVE HIS NUMBER IN MY PHONE...
FOR REAL? WE DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING ...
BUT WHY !?

...HE'D... TAKE MY EAR...
AND IF WE COULDN'T ...

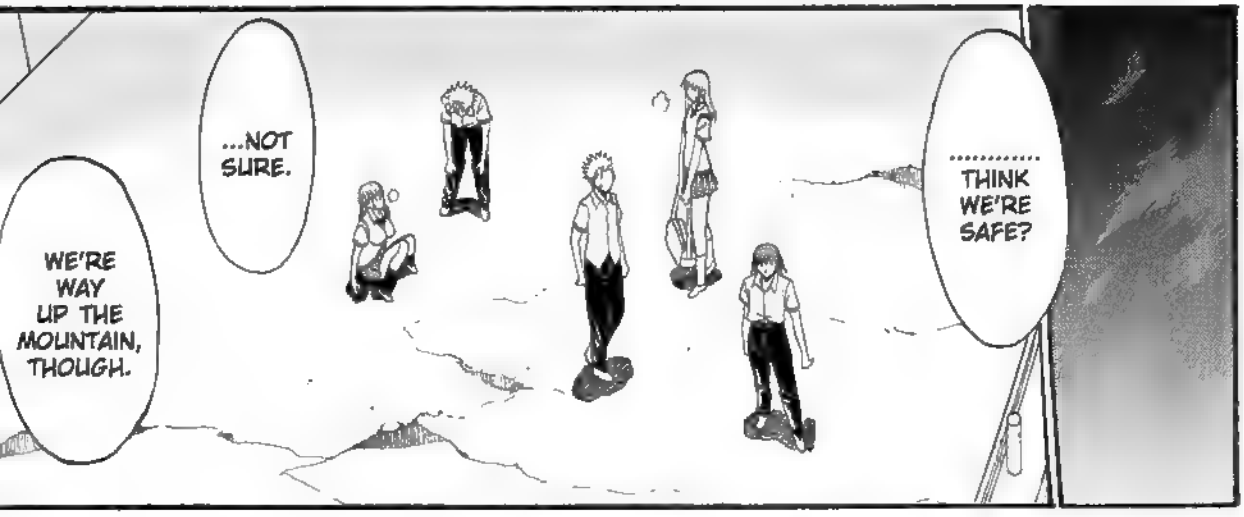
RIGHT! THE PHONE !!
WHAT'D HE SAY TO YOU?
OH... R-RIGHT ...
THAT HE WAS GOING TO KNOCK OVER THAT TREE. AND WE HAD TO DODGE WITHOUT GETTING HURT...

DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A JOKE THOUGH ...
WHO KNOWS IF IT'S TRUE OR NOT.
...!!
WHOA... HOLD ON...

HEY..... SHOULDN'T YOU..... TOSS YOUR PHONE?
AH!! RIGHT!!
YOU TOO, KASUGA-SAN. SORRY.
OH..... OKAY!
LOOM
YOU FAILED.
WHOOSH
PUNISH-MENT TIME.
KYAHH !!
SLAM
WATCH OUT!!
LEAP
CLAK
CLAK

WE NEED TO GET HIGHER .....!!
STAND
KEEP MOV-ING ...
TUG
.....

DASH
CLAK


WE'RE WAY UP THE MOUNTAIN, THOUGH.
...NOT SURE.
..... THINK WE'RE SAFE?

...
?
... KASUGA ?
...!
THE ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO INVESTIGATE THE ABANDONED TUNNEL DEEP IN THE MOUNTAIN, ANYWAY.
THAT'S NOT A PROB-LEM.

LOOK .....
L—
BUT... HOW...?
AH...
CREEP
CREEP
GRAB
SHAKE
SHAKE
!
THAT CELL PHONE ...
NO WAY .....
CREEP
Call Time: 4 Minutes 18 Seconds
CREEP

WHOOOOSH
WHOOSH
Call Time: 6 Minutes 02 seconds
WHOOOOOSH
YEAH... THIS TIME... TO THE TOP...
...AS FAST AS WE CAN, WITHOUT LOOKING BACK...
INCH
..... HEY, LET'S KEEP RUN-NING.
.....I STILL CAN'T SEE THE GUY, BUT...
...THERE'S THIS WEIRD PRESSURE IN THE AIR.....I FEEL THAT.
LET'S GO.
SCRAPE
YEAH ...

RUN !!
TMP
TMP TMP
HAA.
HAA.
TMP
TMP
FLOP
FLOP
FLOP
HAA ...
HAA
HAA
...HE'S GAINING ON US...
... HEY.
NO KID-DING ...!
JUST KEEP RUNNING ...
SLINK

YOUR EAR.
IT'S MINE.
!!
!!
KASUGA-SAN!!
TWITCH
...
UWAHH !!
OUCH.
SLURP
GRIND
WHAM
GAH...!!!

KA-SUGA-SAN !!
THUD
OWR !!

.....
GUESS HE DOESN'T NEED TO HIDE ANY-MORE...
.....'COS I SEE HIM TOO NOW.

SLINK
SLINK
SLINK

... SHIT.
WE CAN'T... SHAKE HIM AT ALL...

KILL SOMEONE IN THE NEXT SIXTY SECONDS.
ROUND 2.

!?

DO IT, AND I'LL BRING YOU HAP-PINESS.
DOESN'T MATTER WHO. YOU HAVE SIXTY SECONDS.
FAIL, AND I'LL... KILL YOU.

LET'S KEEP GOING ...
...!
WE'LL HEAD INSIDE FOR NOW...
WH— WHAT THE HELL'S HE SAYING? .....!!

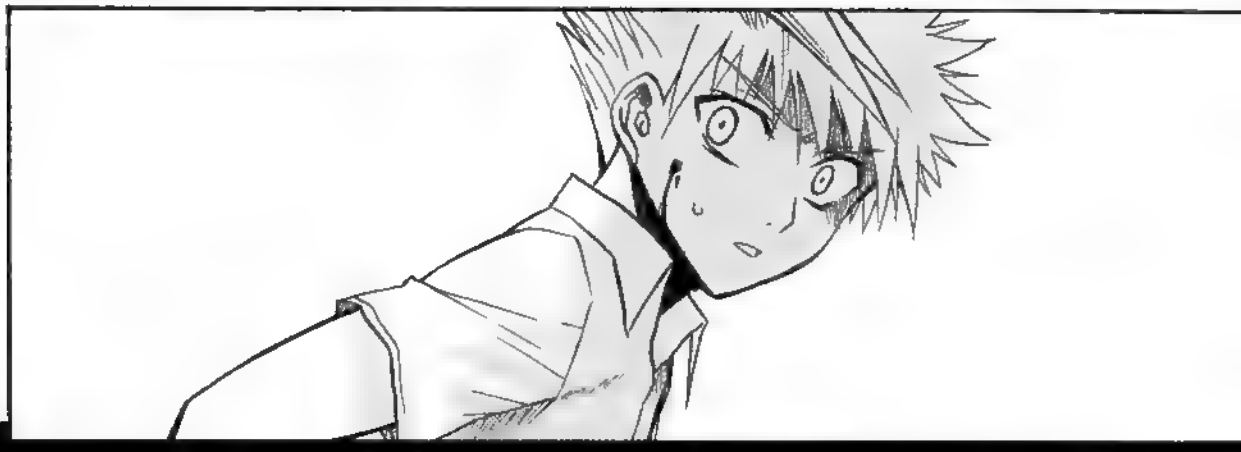
IT'S NO USE.
LOOKING FOR AN ESCAPE ...?
THERE IS NONE.

RING
TRILL
RING
!!
RING
RING
BZZZ
...
NOW..... DECIDE. QUICKLY.
WHO YOU'RE GOING TO KILL.
SLINK
!!
IT CAN'T BE...
RING
BRRRING

I'LL EVEN HELP YOU OUT.
WHAT'S WRONG? DON'T HESITATE.
WELL..... ONLY FIVE SECONDS LEFT.
THIS GUY.....
.....HMM? DON'T YOU WANT HAPPINESS?
JUST POINT AT ONE OF THEM, AND I'LL DO THE KILLING.
TIME'S UP. YOU'RE DEAD.
ONE.
TWO
THREE.
GRIT
FOUR.

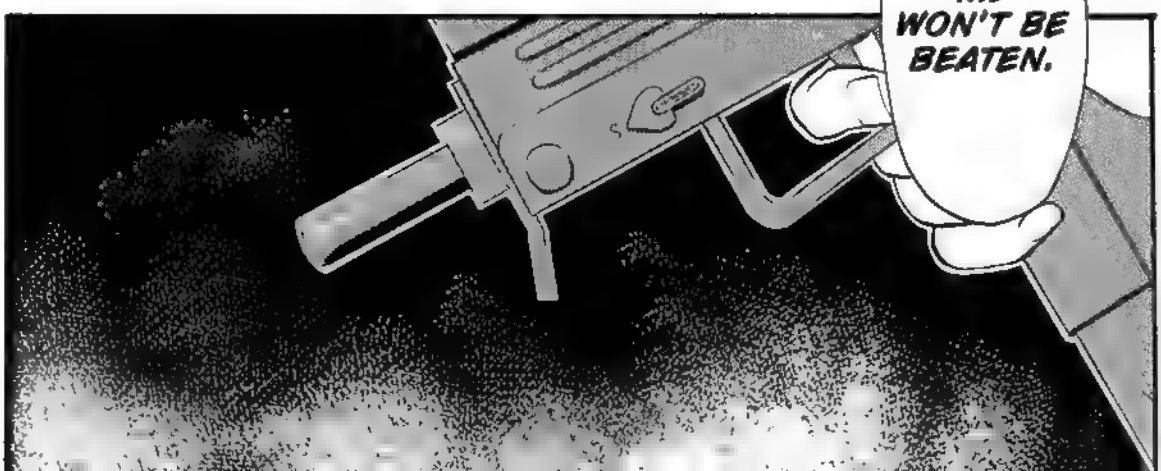
WHAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
THUD
CREAK
SLAM
FSSHH

A HAIL OF BULLETS AND A RAIN OF BLOOD...
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW HER.



LIKE AN EMISSARY OF DEATH...

# DEATH 9: WHISPERING DEATH GOD (PART 3)



... AH.
AHH ...
GAH !!
BLAM
BLAM
AGAHH.
GO- GYAHH.
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
REVEAL IT.
YOUR REAL BODY.
PLINK
PLINK
PLINK

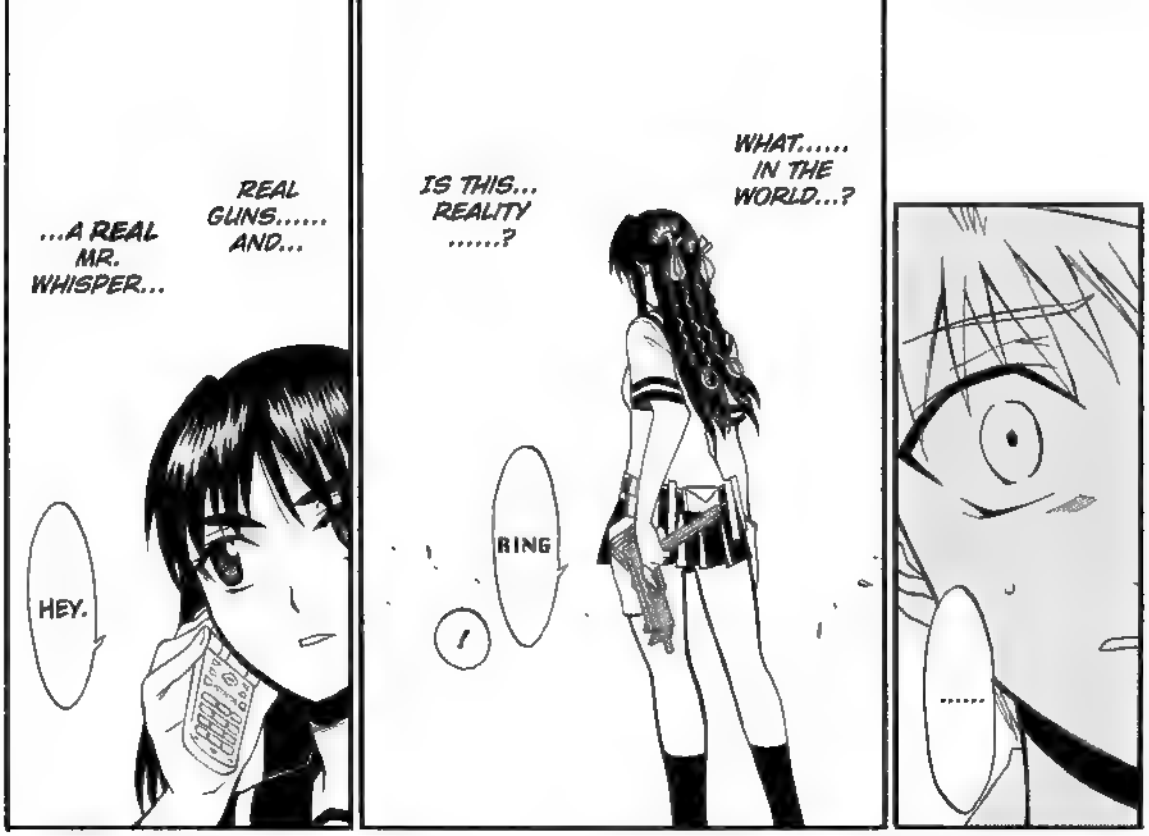
WHOOSH

BUT THE REAL ISSUE NOW IS...
!

...EVEN ONE OF THE MIGHTY SEVEN STARS WILL HAVE TO SHOW HIMSELF.....
AT THIS RATE...
...

THESE GUYS...
WELL... WHAT TO DO...?
トン STEP
トン STEP

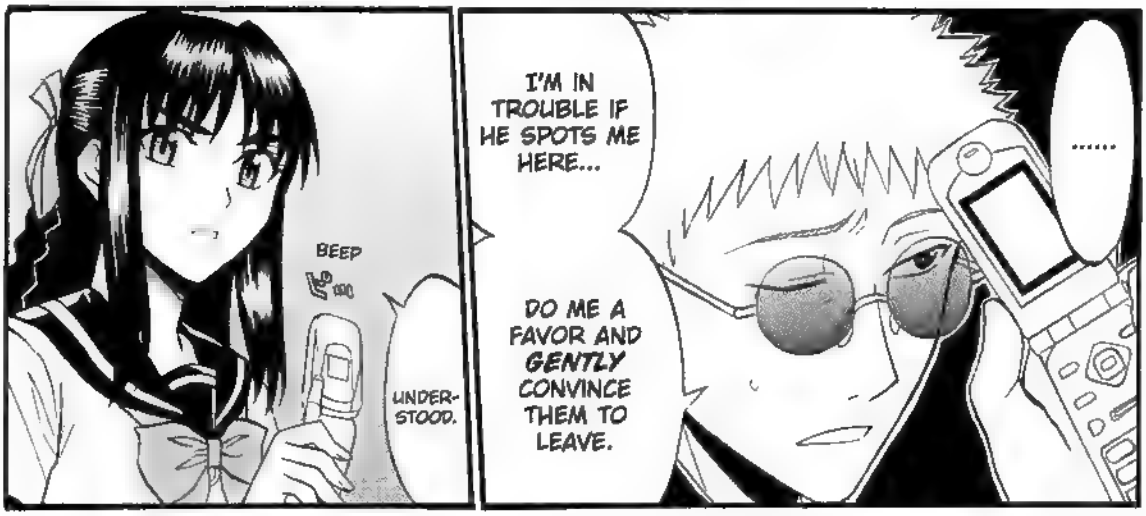
... AH ...


...A REAL MR. WHISPER...
REAL GUNS..... AND...
HEY.
IS THIS... REALITY .....?
WHAT..... IN THE WORLD...?
RING
!
.....

I FOUND A HIDDEN ROOM DOWN BELOW.
HEAD BACK DOWN ONCE YOU'VE TAKEN A BREATHER.
MA-KINA.
YOU FINISH TIDYING UP ABOVE-GROUND TOO?

BEFORE THAT..... THE THIRD GIRL AND HER FRIENDS ARE HERE...
INCLUD-ING ONE FAMILIAR FACE..... WHAT DO I DO?
?
GLANCE
GOT IT.
BUT ...

THE THIRD GIRL.....? NOZOMI KASUGA...? ...WAIT. FAMILIAR FACE...?
!
SOMEONE YOU KNOW .....?
DON'T TELL ME..... IS IT OURI?
Yeah.


I'M IN TROUBLE IF HE SPOTS ME HERE...
.....
DO ME A FAVOR AND GENTLY CONVINCE THEM TO LEAVE.
BEEP
UNDER-STOOD.

.....
IT'S DEFINITELY.. THE ONE BIG BRO HAS..
THAT CELL PHONE MODEL.....

...ISN'T SOME-WHERE YOU BELONG.
THE PATH FROM HERE ON...
STEP
STEP
YOU KIDS..... NEED TO LEAVE.

...AH. RIGHT.
... BUT ...
YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT...
... BETTER THAN ANYONE.
BADUM

SO..... PLEASE. JUST GO HOME.
COME TOMORROW, YOU'LL LEARN WHETHER OR NOT THE OTHER TWO MADE IT.

!!
BLAM
WAIT JUST A SECOND ...!!

THIS IS A GUN.
A REAL-LIFE...
...GET-SHOT-AND-YOU-DIE, GUN...
.....
SO LET ME BE CLEAR.
STEP
IF YOU STEP PAST THAT BULLET HOLE I JUST MADE.....I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOUR LIVES.
KEI-SEI.
OH. THAT WAS QUICK.
...SO. DID YOU PERSUADE THEM GENTLY... LIKE I ASKED?
HOW DO I PUT THIS ...?
SURE.

BAM
LET'S HEAD IN.
..... WELL, WHATEVER.

STAY ON GUARD...
HE COULD BE ANYWHERE ...
DANGLE
NOTHING HERE...

!?
WH—
THUD

DROOP
WHAT ...?

NO PULSE...
ARGH ...!
FWIP
THE SECOND GIRL .....

SHIT ...
AT AN ANGLE WE COULDN'T SEE FROM THE EN-TRANCE.
SHE WAS HUNG UP IN THOSE PIPES.

WHAT THE...?
THERE'S SOMETHING..... IN HER MOUTH...
ポロ
BURBLE
SHOOM
KEISEI !!
STEP
GUSH
SLICE

CREEP
CLANG
CLAK
BLAM
YOU ...
BLAM
SEVEN STARS !!!
CREEP
CREEP
BANG
BANG

YOU
...
FWOOM

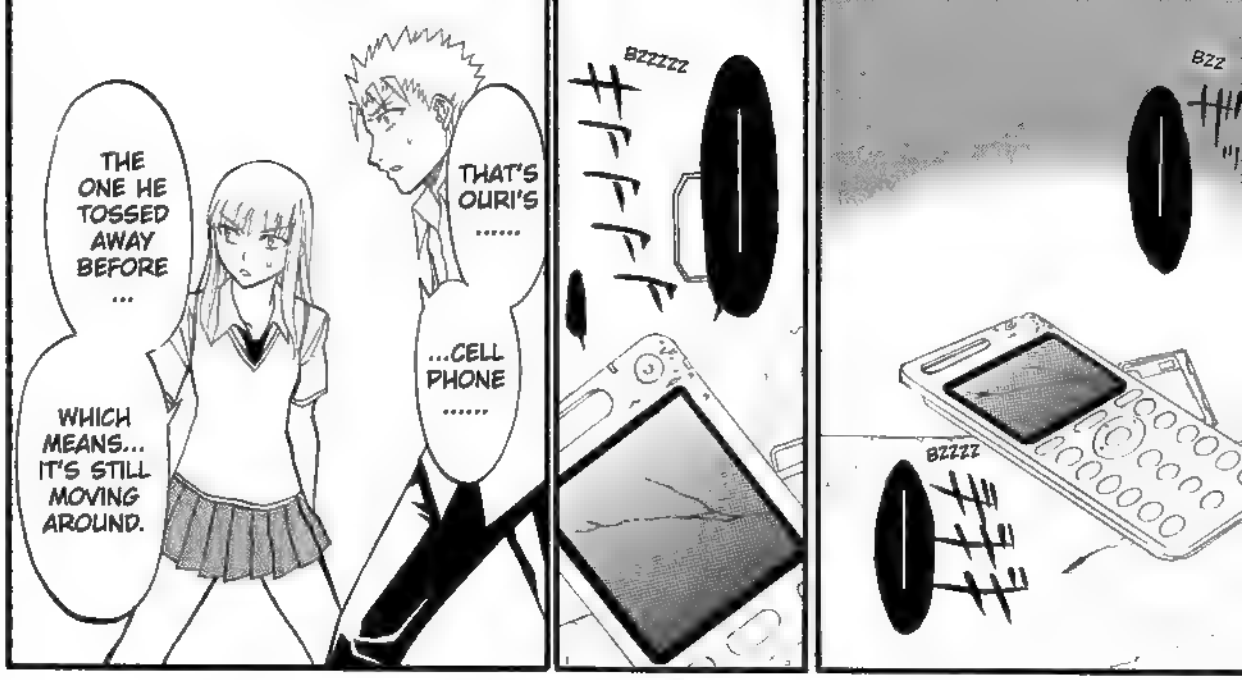
!!
WHAK
GLK
CRACK
STOMP
TCH...
HE'S QUICK...
...!!
WHOOSH
STEP
CRUNCH
CRUNCH

WHAK
BURST
GAH
GUHH !!
THUD
--OFF--
UHH ...
KU KU KU ...
KA KA ...
I WAS FEELING SOME REAL BLOODLUST COMING FROM YOU.
AND LOOK WHO IT IS.....
DANGLE

...
WIPE
KACHAK
IT'S YOU... THE BED-WETTING BRAT...
... FROM THE HOSHIMURA HOUSE...
STEP
HAS IT REALLY BEEN A YEAR ALREADY?
SORRY 'BOUT ALL THAT, BACK THEN.
THE CROWD I RUN WITH... THEY'RE NOT GOOD AT HOLDING BACK.
THAT AMAZING LOOK ON YOUR FACE AND THOSE BEAUTIFUL SCREAMS OF YOURS AS WE TORE YOU LIMB FROM LIMB...
CRUNCH
IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ANY FUN IF WE KILLED YOU STRAIGHT-AWAY.
SNAP

SO..... WHAT DO WE DO?
...
I MEAN, THAT GIRL HAD GUNS.
REAL ONES.
THIS IS STARTING TO SEEM WAY OUT OF OUR LEAGUE .....
WHAT DO WE DO.....?
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.....
BUT WAIT ...
EVEN IF WE MADE A REPORT... IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THEY DON'T SHOW UP ON THE SCENE...
GNAW!
...TOO HARD TO EXPLAIN...
...WHAT ABOUT THE POLICE ?
USHI-JIMA... SHUT UP...!
INDEED. SHE LOOKED STERN, YET AT THE SAME TIME KINDA CUTE.
IF ONLY SHE WOULD LOSE THE GUNS.
KA-SUGA.
THAT GIRL... SHE AN ACQUAIN-TANCE OF YOURS?

SHE SAVED ME...BACK IN THE "MAN-EATING BUILDING."
IT'S JUST...
I WOULDN'T SAY... "ACQUAIN-TANCE"...
SHE...
SHE EXISTS TO KILL THE UNDEAD. CORPSES WITH LINGERING REGRETS.
SHE CALLED HERSELF..... A CORPSE PRINCESS.
...!
MAN-EATING BUILDING ?
SO THAT WAS ALL TRUE, THEN?
OURI ?
LIKE FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE.....
SO...
KILLING THE EVIL DEAD WITH ANOTHER UNDEAD .....
...NO WAY.
BZZ
BZZZZ


THE ONE HE TOSSED AWAY BEFORE ...
WHICH MEANS... IT'S STILL MOVING AROUND.
THAT'S OURI'S .....
...CELL PHONE .....
BZZZZZ
BZZ
BZZZZ

.....LIKE ON A WIRELESS RADIO...
RECEPTION OF A CALL...?
I CAN..... HEAR SOME-THING.....

HA HA HA HA.
BZZ
BZZ
ドン
BAM
バン
WHAM
Didn't ... get there ...
BZZZ
Sorry ... about ...
Makina !!
SLAM

THAT VOICE .....
A GHOSTLY PHONE CALL.
THE SAME PHONE MODEL.
IT CAN'T BE!!
STEP
NO WAY!! THAT VOICE JUST NOW .....
BADUM
SOUNDED JUST LIKE HIM...
BADUM
HUH !?
OURI !!
DASH
EH?
...

SKID
SLAM
SCRAPE
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
HMPH.
BEEP
KU KU KU.
WHAT'S WRONG, BED-WETTER?
DON'T YOU WANT REVENGE ?
SLINK
SLINK SLINK

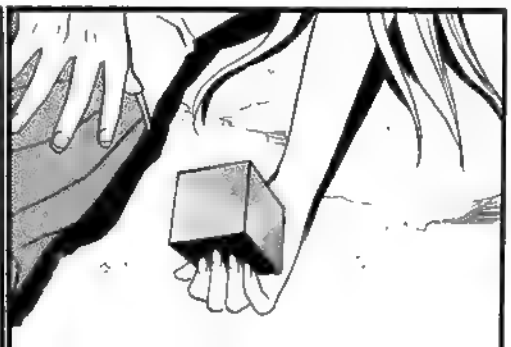
SLINK
Call Time: 18 seconds
SLINK
Call Time: 15 seconds
SLINK
SLINK
SLINK
REVENGE FOR YOUR HOUSE. YOUR FAMILY. YOUR OWN LIFE.
RIGHT ?
COME AND KILL ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT.
BOOM

DON'T STOP!! KEEP AT IT!!!
YOU DON'T WANNA KILL ME BAD ENOUGH !!!
KNEEL
BANG
BANG
BANG
YES !!
HYA HA HA HA

.... GUH ...
MA-KINA ...

SHE MANAGED TO MAKE IT OUT OF THE UNDER-GROUND, BUT NOW...
NO GOOD..... SHE'S LOST HERSELF...
!

.....A BOX?
WHAT THE.....



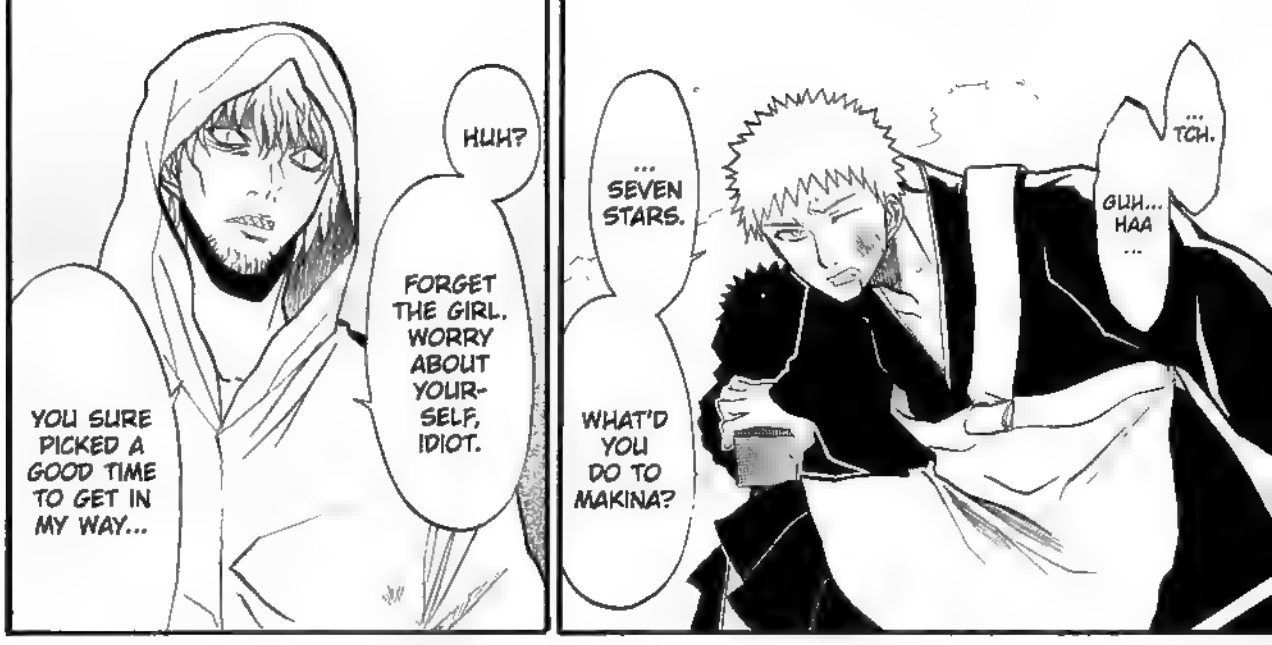
TMP
BLAM
NOW JUST THE MAIN BODY!!
HAA.
...
TCH.
STEP
!!
SLAM

HOW ...
ANOTHER CLONE ...?
FROM WHERE ...?
!?
WHAT ...?
YOUR OWN PHONE.
AS I AM NOW...
...I CAN CURSE ANY CELL PHONE WITHIN A TEN METER RADIUS.
BLAM
BANG
BANG
BLAM
ARGH!!
UWAHHHH!!
!!

HMPH.
KU KU KU .....
THAT'S A GOOD LOOK FOR YOU, LITTLE BED-WETTER.
CLICK
HAA ...
... TCH.
NOW THEN ...
PRESS
CHAK
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
GYAHH !!
ARGH !!
TIME TO HAVE SOME FUN.
TRY NOT TO DIE UNTIL IT'S ALL OVER.

FSSHH
!?
CLAK
FADE
WHY?
MY CLONE'S DISAP-PEAR-ING..!?
.....
GWAHH !!
PIERCE
RIGHT... IT'S HIM.
.....
...TOO BAD. WE'VE GOTTA MAKE THIS QUICK.
TCH.
...RIGHT BACK FOR YOU.
LICK
I'LL BE...
WAIT HERE.

...THAT THIS IS A CATALYST FOR CURSING PEOPLE.
JUST TOUCHING IT GIVES ME THE CHILLS. IT'S CLEAR ...
...
...WITH THE SEVEN STARS' SYMBOL DRAWN IN BLOOD...
THIS DARK RED BOX...
THIS BOX...
WIPE
!!
MONK ?
YOU REALLY NEVER SEEN A BOX LIKE THAT BEFORE?
THAT'S GOT THE "FINAL BLOOD" OF ABOUT A HUNDRED PEOPLE STUFFED IN IT...IT'S A PRETTY RARE THING.
IT CAN'T BE REPLACED.
SO I'LL BE TAKING IT BACK.
THUD
WHAP


HUH?
FORGET THE GIRL. WORRY ABOUT YOUR-SELF, IDIOT.
YOU SURE PICKED A GOOD TIME TO GET IN MY WAY...
... SEVEN STARS.
WHAT'D YOU DO TO MAKINA?
... TCH.
GUH... HAA ...

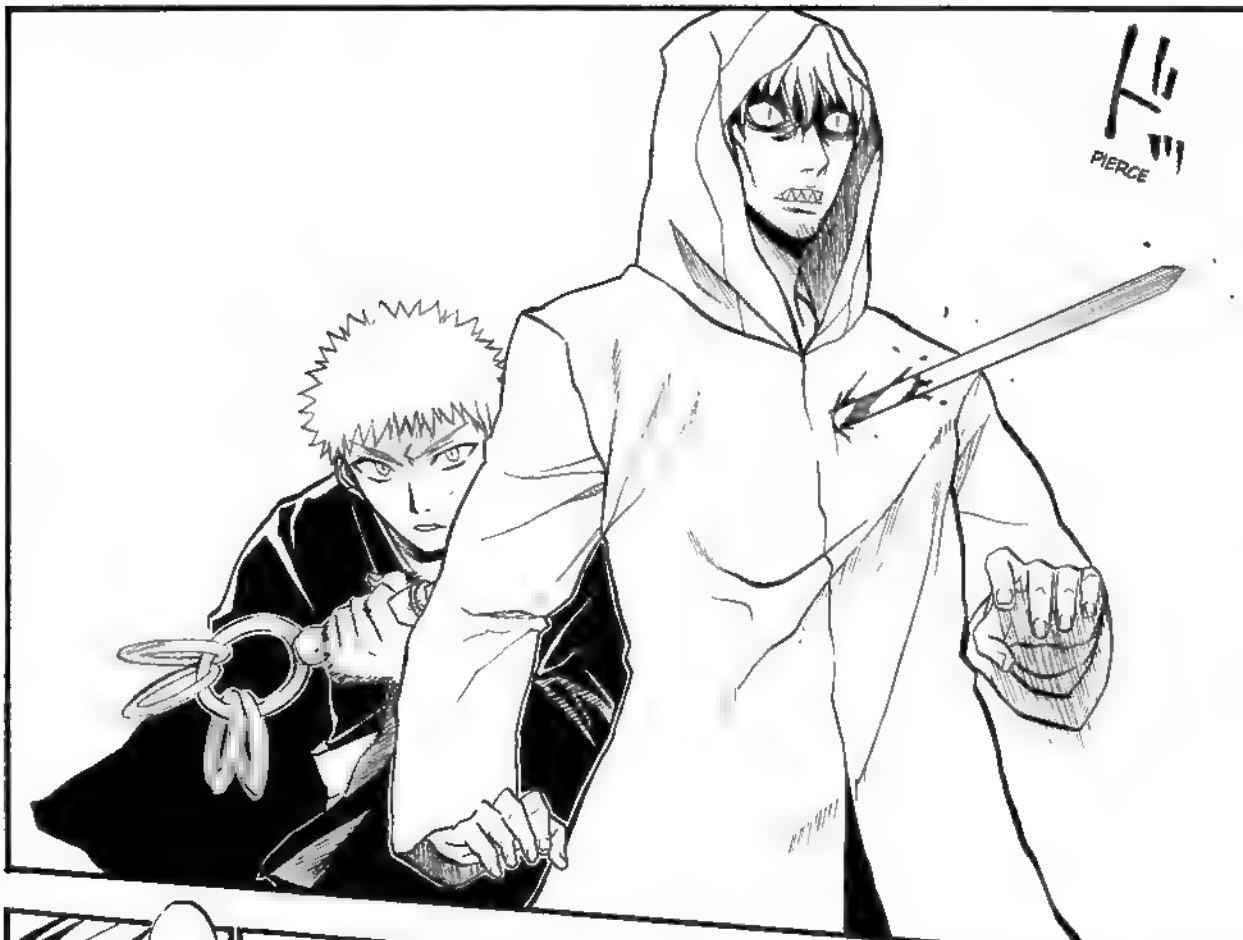
...
STEP
BUT IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU...? OR TO THE UNCLEAN BUNCH?
...SO THIS BOX IS REALLY THAT IMPORTANT, HUH.....?
.....

HOW OBEDIENT OF YOU.
THAT'S WHY YOU'VE GOT TO PROTECT THIS THING...AM I RIGHT?
I KNOW THE SEVEN STARS HAVE BEEN ABSORBED BY THE UNCLEAN BUNCH.

...SO BE A GOOD BOY AND DIE!
I'M GONNA BE KILLING YOU NOW...
YOU'RE A CHATTY MONK, AREN'CHA.
...HA.

I'VE FIGURED YOU OUT.
YOU DRAW YOUR SEVEN STARS SYMBOL ON THIS BOX AND CRAM IT FULL OF THE REGRETS OF THE GIRLS YOU'VE CURSED AND KILLED. IT'S LIKE A BATTERY.
THAT'S HOW YOU BECAME MR. WHISPER.
JUST TOUCHING THIS BOX IS ENOUGH TO CAUSE SPIRITUAL DAMAGE TO BODY AND SOUL .....
IT'S A CATALYST THAT EN-HANCES A SHIKABANE'S CURSE POWERS ...
SQUEEZE
.....
SO .....?
WHAT ABOUT IT?
!?
SHATTER
..... SO...
IF WE DESTROY YOUR SPIRIT OBJECT— THAT PHONE—
WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR CURSE?
HUH?

YOU
...
HAA.
HAA.
DRIP


PIERCE

.....
OH?
YOU GOT CARE-LESS.
YOU GOT WAY TOO COCKY ABOUT YOUR POSITION.
LET ME TELL YOU WHY YOU LOST.

WHAT EXACTLY .....DID I DO?
!
GRAB
AGAINST THE SEVEN STARS ...
...A TOY LIKE THIS BARELY TICKLES .....!!
!!
STAB
YOU'VE REALLY PISSED ME OFF NOW..... YOU HUMAN TRASH.
CRACK
BREAKING MY SPIRIT OBJECT? TRYING TO STOP MY CURSE...?
GLH ...
SPURT
AH...
WELL !?

WHAM
YOU NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT YOUR OPPONENT MIGHT BE OBSERVING.
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRACK
CRACK
...IN OTHER WORDS ...
!?
CRACK
BURST
...WHAAA.

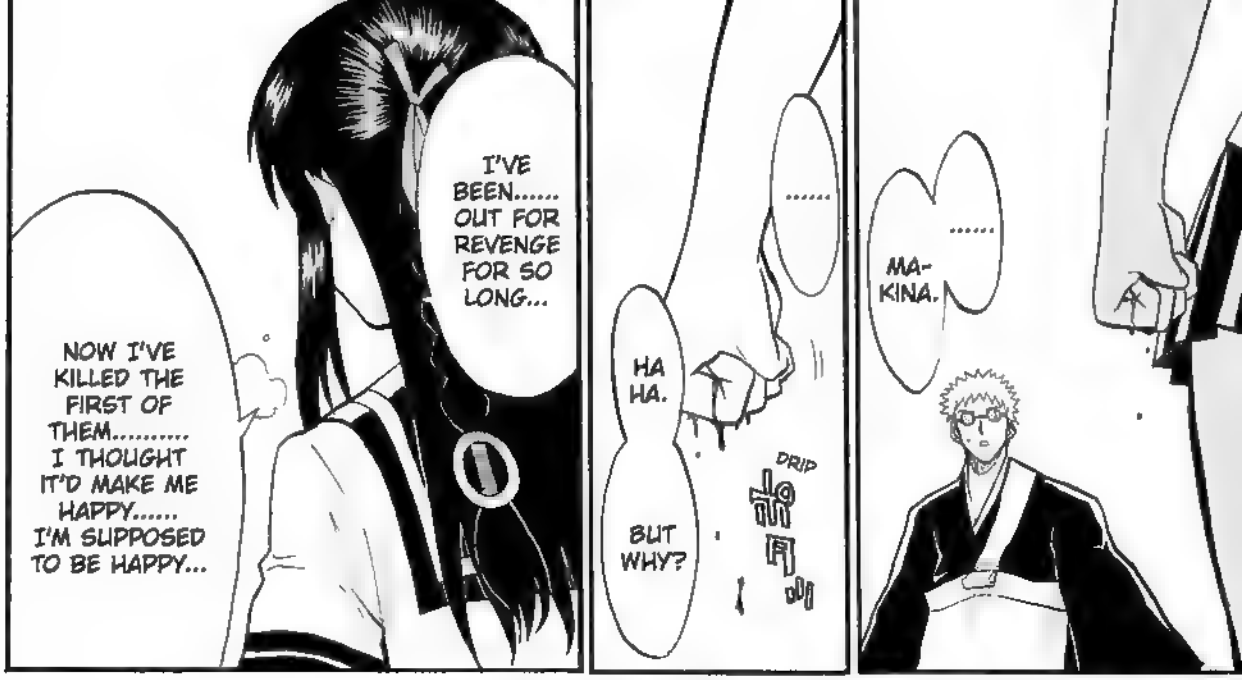
FLEK
FLEK
SPLASH
EEEEE !?
..... YOU.
YOU KNEW THAT DESTROYING THE BOX WOULD RELEASE ALL THAT CURSED "FINAL BLOOD" ...
YOU KNEW THAT EVEN A LITTLE BIT WOULD HIT YOU WITH SOME HEAVY SPIRITUAL DAMAGE .....!!
WARP
TCH ...
SKID
YOU...!! YOU SERIOUS !?
UOHH ...
WOBBLE
... GAH.
AH ...
SWAY
... HA.
HA HA HA.
YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING THAT.
.....IT WAS THE ONLY WAY I COULD THINK OF TO CREATE AN OPENING .....

LOOM
.....!
THANKS, KEISEI .....
HUFF!
I'LL..... TAKE IT FROM HERE.
GRIP
WHAM

AHHHH!!
OHH ...
SWAY
... TCH ...
...
WHAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
SWIRL
D-..... DAMMIT ...!!
100-PLUS DOSES OF CURSED, REGRET-FILLED BLOOD..... THEY'RE STEALING MY CONSCIOUS-NESS...!!
THEY'RE GOING ...
AND TAKING ME WITH THEM ...!!

...!!
THUMP
TENSE
...
HMPH.
...I'LL TAKE MY HAPPY MEMORIES BACK.
...AND THEN...
I'LL KILL YOU ALL...
BRAT.
LEER
THOSE REGRETS WILL GNAW AT YOU FOREVER.
A SOUL SCARRED BY THE SEVEN STARS CAN NEVER HEAL.

POW


I'VE BEEN..... OUT FOR REVENGE FOR SO LONG...
NOW I'VE KILLED THE FIRST OF THEM..... I THOUGHT IT'D MAKE ME HAPPY..... I'M SUPPOSED TO BE HAPPY...
.....
HA HA.
BUT WHY?
DRIP
.....
MA-KINA.

.....
SQUEEZE
SO WHY .....?

.....BIG ...BRO ...?
.....
HAA.
HAA.

!
SHOVE
...
OURI.

.....
BIG
BRO
.....

.....
WHAT'S
WITH
THAT
FACE?
LIKE
A KID
WHO'S
ABOUT
TO CRY.
...BIG
BRO.
WHY'RE
YOU
HERE?

IN THIS ...
... SEA OF BLOOD ...
...AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD.
WHY'RE YOU HERE, BIG BRO?

... HUH?
AN-SWER ME.

BIG BRO ...!!
Corpse Princess 2 End

# 2

# CORPSE PRINCESS

- CORPSE PRINCESS PRODUCTION HELPERS:
  - -SAKANO-SAN
  - -TASHIRO-KUN
  - -MARK
- EMERGENCY HELPERS:
  - -NIJOU-CHAN
  - -MEGUMI-SAN
  - -KIRII-SAN
  - -AKIRA-SAN
- SUPERVISOR: SHIMIZU-SHI

AND THANKS TO ALL THE READERS OUT THERE!

RIKA ARAGAMI
BLOOD TYPE: O HEIGHT: 171 CM WEIGHT: 55
BIRTHDAY: APRIL 3RD AGE: 23
FAVORITE THINGS: FLOWERS, SPRING, CLEANING
LEAST FAVORITE THINGS: CATERPILLARS, DIRTY PLACES
SPECIAL ABILITIES: COOKING (SHE EVEN HAS A PROFESSIONAL LICENSE)
*CURRENTLY A GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENT
SAKI AMASE
BLOOD TYPE: B HEIGHT: 121 CM WEIGHT: 28 KG
BIRTHDAY: AUGUST 8TH
AGE: AT DEATH—10 (MENTAL AGE IS ALSO 10)
FAVORITE THINGS: SNACKS (MOSTLY SALTY ONES), SOFT DRINKS
LEAST FAVORITE THINGS: PEPPERS, BITTER FOOD
SPECIAL ABILITIES: IDENTIFYING POTATO CHIP BRANDS BY TASTE
SURE.
HMM?
WANNA TRY OVER THERE?

"ANSWER ME, BIG BRO...!!" OURI KAGAMI'S PEACEFUL, EVERYDAY LIFE HAS BEGUN TO ERODE. MAKINA ENCOUNTERS THE TARGETS OF HER REVENGE— THE SEVEN STARS. KEISEI WATCHES AS THE DARKNESS THAT SURROUNDS HIS OWN LIFE ENCROACHES ON HIS FAMILY,T AND AKASHA AND HIS UNCLEAN BUNCH WRITHE IN THE SHADOWS. SLOWLY BUT SURELY, THE LINE BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT BEGINS TO BLUR...

SHIKABANE KILLS NEEDED FOR CORPSE PRINCESS MAKINA HOSHIMURA TO ASCEND TO HEAVEN: 95

3

volume

COMING SOON

# CORPSE PRINCESS

WHAT IF? SERIES ②
WHAT IF CORPSE PRINCESS WAS A MAGICAL GIRL SERIES?
HEINOUS
NO REAL MAGICAL GIRL WOULD STINK OF BLOOD LIKE THAT...
BAM
MASCOT

AKAHITO YOSHIICHI

## KEISEI TAGAMI

HEIGHT: 184 CM WEIGHT: 80 KG
BLOOD TYPE: O
BIRTHDAY: JANUARY 11TH AGE: 33
FAVORITE THINGS: PICKLED PLUMS WITH TEA OVER RICE, SALTED KOMBU, JAPANESE SAKE
LEAST FAVORITE THINGS: NOTHING REALLY
SPECIAL ABILITIES: FLYING KITES, RAISING GIANT STAG BEETLES

AFTER GRADUATING MIDDLE SCHOOL IN HIS HOMETOWN, HE ATTENDED A HIGH SCHOOL AND VOCATIONAL COLLEGE RUN BY THE KOUGON SECT. HE THEN ENTERED THE PRIESTHOOD FORMALLY. IT WAS THEN THAT HE MET SADAHIRO.

CORPSE PRINCESS

# TRANSLATION NOTES

*COMMON HONORIFICS*

no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.
-san: The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.
-sama: Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.
-kun: Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.
-chan (also -tan): An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.
-senpai: An honorific used to address upperclassmen or more experienced coworkers.
-sensei: A respectful honorific for teachers, artists, or high-level professionals.

*OVERALL*

Japanese Buddhism has a complex ranking system for its monks called *soukan* (*sou* meaning "monk," and *kan* implying hierarchy). Monks in this story often address each other by rank. Volume 1 includes (in descending order) Dai-soujou, Soujou Takamine, Shou-soujou Tagami (Keisei), and Dai-souzu Isaki.

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Akasha's three-pronged weapon is one variation of the broader, *"kongousho."* Half weapon, half ritual item, these bladed, pestle-like tools originated in India and came to be prominent in Japanese esoteric Buddhism.

*PAGE 47*

The Rakshasa is a demonic man-eater from Hindu mythology that's found a place in Buddhism. Akasha invokes the name while summoning his Bizarre Lotus.

*PAGE 48*

The "ladder lottery" or *"amida-kuji"* is a simple selection game. A number of parallel lines are joined by rungs placed in a random manner. Players pick one end of one of the parallel lines and follow their chosen paths, crossing each time they hit a rung. Where they end up on the other side determines who wins, loses, or gets stuck with classroom chore duty.

*PAGE 83*

Inuhiko's insult makes more sense in the original Japanese, because Ushijima's last name literally means "cow island." And he's not the only one with an animal in his name. *The "inu"* in "Inuhiko" means "dog," and the *"tori"* in "Sumitori" means "bird."

# CORPSE PRINCESS ❷

Yoshiichi Akahito

Translation: Caleb D. Cook
Lettering: AndWorld Design

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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